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MISS BEAUCHAMP:

A PHILISTINE.

VOL. I.

MISS BEAUCHAMP: A PHILISTINE.

BY
CONSTANCE MAC EWEN,

AUTHOR OF
"GIN A BODY MEET A BODY," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

"Such a Lord is Love."

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL
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PREFACE.

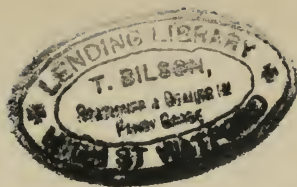
14 Jan 59 B. 2. 3
The modern meaning of the term Philistine has been so variously rendered, that it may be as well to explain that my heroine, Miss Beauchamp, is merely called "A Philistine" in derision, as she is the reverse of a Philistine, whether you translate the word according to a great living writer, or according to Byron, or according to the usual translation of the term as opposed to the *Æsthetical* School.

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February 27th, 1883.

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VOLUME I.

“Love took up the harp of Life and smote on all the
chords with might,
Smote the chord of Self, that trembling, pass'd in
music out of sight.”

MISS BEAUCHAMP:

A PHILISTINE.

CHAPTER I.

GROPINGS.

“ ‘ *Proputty, proputty, proputty,* ’ *that’s what I ’ears ’em*
saäy . . . : ‘ Proputty, proputty, proputty.’ ”

DIANA BEAUCHAMP — the last of the Beauchamps, the inheritor of all the distinguished points of that distinguished race ; the inheritor of all the accumulated wit and brilliant parts of that hair-brained assemblage of ancestral dignitaries who had made ducks and drakes of all that was come-at-able, and

left Beauchamp Court mortgaged up to its last tree, to this, the sole remaining representative of that once prolific race, Diana Beauchamp.

“You say the property is strictly entailed, Mr. Bovin?”

Mr. Bovin murmured assent (he is not at all like a lawyer—more like a rosy-cheeked farmer, more like cattle and hams and pecks o’ barley). “Entailed upon you and your heirs,” he adds lazily, as if the hum of bees is in his ears, and the rhythm of scythes; “that’s the meaning of entail. Ladies are supposedly ignorant of these matters.”

“Can I let the estate?”

“No, Miss Beauchamp, you cannot; there is a curious clause in the title-deeds relating to that question.”

“It seems I can do nothing but live here, and yet have nothing to live on.”

“Just so, my dear young lady; it’s provoking, very provoking.” And then Mr. Bovin looked as growly as a good-natured farmer might look on a drenching ingathering day.

“In Italy I supported myself; doubtless you have heard of my proceedings,” said Diana, leaning her head on her hand, and looking reflectively down the grand avenue which faced the window.

“Very creditable, very highly creditable,” responded Mr. Bovin, clinking the dangles on his massive gold chain. “You are the last of a clever race.”

“A clever race, were they?” said Diana dreamily, as if she were some alien offshoot.

“Was Sir Golf clever?”

“In his own line,” said Mr. Bovin.

“What line?”

Mr. Bovin dimpled—or *dumpled* perhaps is a more appropriate term—into easy smiles.

“Fishing. Sir Golf hooked the biggest salmon that—well, that *ever* was hooked. It weighed eighty pounds.”

“Ah!” said Diana, looking away from Mr. Bovin with a wholly humoristic smile.

“There are so many styles of cleverness, Miss Beauchamp, so many and various forms. I take it that a man who hooks a big salmon is as clever as the man who badgers his witness into a hysterical state of negation. Each hooks his salmon on his *own* line.” After this Mr. Bovin looked downwards on his flowered waistcoat, and smiled aldermanically.

“I am interested in Sir Golf, because Mrs. Battle says I am so like him,” said Diana.

“Mrs. Battle studied Sir Golf’s features, doubtless. Yes, now you mention it, I think you do resemble Sir Golf very markedly. But this is natural. He was your father’s

brother, very near of kin." Then silence fell.

"You know who originated my recitations, Mr. Bovin?"

"I do; the Philothea — a remarkable woman, a very remarkable woman. I took Mrs. Bovin to hear her lecture. She quite upset my wife, dear soul." Then Mr. Bovin "dumpled" in cycles as if recollection had stirred a mischievous brain-wave. "The Philothea was lost in the *Livonia*, and left her immense fortune to a chance acquaintance, Miss Cora Forsyth, since married to that radical fellow Carrington Mervin. I wish she had left her fortune to you, Miss Beauchamp. Well, well, you must carry on your recitations in this country. You may redeem the estate."

Mr. Bovin's brow had puckered up, and his lips were drawn tightly together. These

were his facial activities when legally speaking. He was unprepared for the effect of his words; he had thought his client distinguished-looking, but unemotional, veering towards northern rather than southern hemispheres. With an exclamation of joy Diana rose and took those two podgy hands of Mr. Bovin's in her own, and held them, to his discomfort.

“You have won my eternal gratitude. You have filled me with hope. *Yes, I will* redeem the estate. But do not English people look somewhat coldly on this form of entertainment? What of their criticism? Could I bear it? Should I meet with the exquisite courtesy in this country I have met with in Italy? Will stolid stares discountenance me?”

Mr. Bovin's hands were safely tucked away. He did not understand emotional people;

besides, he had thought Miss Beauchamp the reverse of emotional, and it's very discountenancing to find people different to your conceptions. You never recover your surprise, and the surprise opens out into all sorts of odd suggestions and overbalancing conceptions, so that you never feel righted again. Besides, his hands belonged to Mrs. Bovin, dear good soul.

If only Diana could have followed these reflective mazes in which the amiable, bucolic, and eminently unimaginative Mr. Bovin found himself, she too would have been filled with discountenancing reflections; but Diana was as one floundering in quagmires when conversing with Mr. Bovin. He was a lawyer, and, furthermore, her lawyer. He would understand her enthusiasm.

"I have no doubt you would draw a large audience," he at last said, speaking slowly

and with measurement. "He or she who points with one finger, standing midway on a stretch of pavement—north, south, east, or west—draws a large and interested audience shortly to his or her side. I think the fact that Miss Beauchamp, of Beauchamp, will appear in 'Recitation' is sufficient guarantee of an interested audience. With regard to the Gorgonizing stare, people will *pay* to stare, and English people, now more than ever, exact the full value of their coin. It's a Cheap Jack age."

"How many thousand pounds will it take to redeem Beauchamp?" said Diana, rising and pacing the room, her head bent slightly forward as she stood for a moment facing Mr. Bovin in the flickering light of the fire, with the dusky wintry shadows enfolding her in their mysterious mantlings.

"Of course I was joking, Miss Beauchamp.

You can never redeem the Court, though you may make a sufficiently handsome income to live up to the requirements of an æsthetical age."

"How many thousand pounds will it take to redeem Beauchamp?" reiterated Diana; her tone was impelling, and her slight fingers were tightly interlaced.

"Fifty thousand pounds would pay off the mortgage," said Mr. Bovin lazily. Once more the hum of bees and the rhythm of scythes were surely in his ears. When we are dealing with visionaries we may surely look sleepy.

"Ah!" said Diana; and then she resumed her walk up and down the faded carpet as if Mr. Bovin was out of her ken. What transmitted grace lurked in the movements of Diana! Somehow you liked to watch her. She seemed to mingle with the sighings and

whisperings and changeful moods of Nature's mysticism.

"Well, I think I must be going back to Mrs. Bovin now, dear soul," said Mr. Bovin, rising slowly and warily from the arm-chair which had held him longer than he had intended; but sometimes a piece of furniture will hold us as tightly as any person or thing. How much heroism has been slaughtered by a few downy feathers and a padded piece of seduction installed in a warm corner! There is subtle power in a meditative grip.

"Mrs. Bovin must have won your thanks, Mr. Bovin, or else you would not call her a 'dear soul.' Whenever husbands call their wives 'dear souls' I feel sure they have merited this distinction by some conspicuous forbearance."

Mr. Bovin regarded his client with a stare

which had something of fear in its composition. Was she in fun, or was she in earnest? These wide-awake young ladies were a positive nineteenth century nightmare.

How thankful he felt that Mrs. Bovin was as she was, "dear soul," groping about in a twilight existence. Miss Beauchamp would twist everybody and everything upside down.

"Of course I was joking," said Diana, regarding mischievously the crumpled appearance Mr. Bovin had developed.

"Joking as far as *you* are concerned, though in most instances I assure you 'tis the case. I've seen such a comical side of life, for my observations have been carried on through a powerful telescope at a long range—always at a long range—in wholesome fear of claws and teeth."

Mr. Bovin smiled, and bowed with the respect

due to a clever client ; and, as he walked down the avenue, which no mortgagee could rob of its calm dignity, mentally ejaculated, "From all clever women defend me !"

CHAPTER II.

HOMESPUN.

“ And because right is right, to follow right were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.”

DIANA paced up and down the faded carpet, which had received the impress of so many bygone feet, amidst the shadowy furniture which had stood “ exactly so ” for so many generations,—up and down, heedless of the gloom. What is sunlight or moonlight, heat or cold, times or seasons, to a dominant spirit? She was a sculptor carving a destiny,—carving it exquisitely, as if *she* were the President who ordered her own goings. Life had been a struggle hitherto; it would be none the less

so now—the acquisition of Beauchamp was no positive gain.

For years she had been alone in the world ; for years she had been flung on her own resources, and those resources consisted in a marvellously retentive memory, an exquisite sensibility (which seemed to weave the sorrows and joys of the character she portrayed in her recitations into the very warp and woof of her own being), a voice of sweet and powerful range, and a subtle distinction of manner which, like a magnet, repelled where it did not draw. “The continental world declared there was ‘matter’ in me ; will the insular world say so too ?” mused Diana.

“Fifty thousand pounds,”—a sum acquired by men over and over again ; by women rarely, unless they are able to draw through the medium of a quill pen and a drop of ink ; unless they have a daisy-chain kind of mind, or

brains which can toss off some flowers of rhetoric. "Hope, I invoke thee!" cried Diana aloud. "Come, gaily decked sprite, with thy eager glad eyes, and whisper in the quick o' my ear that I shall redeem the Court." But there was no answer to her cry save the answer of her own indomitable will.

"Here is *something* on which to expend these burning energies, which are for ever urging and goading me to enterprise. Here is *something* to conquer.

"Mr. Bovin laughed as ironically as if I had said I would pay off the national debt. Mr. Bovin thinks it's a pity that I am not a 'dear soul'; but circumstances, be they what they may, will never turn me into a 'dear soul.' I've a yearning after the 'dear souls'; I stretch out mental feelers towards them; I often cry out for a placid interior—for a soul which wonders not, questions not. I cry out for the moral and

mental paraphernalia of a 'dear soul'—the comfortable nature which wakes up with a 'dear dear'—and trots up and down the highways and byways of life, and comes off without scars and scratches." And now Diana laughed—laughed with the spring-tide of a pure laugh, rung out unadulterated.

"If Mrs. Battle hears me laughing all alone, she will think all descriptions of things," thought Diana. "This comes of a solitary existence and solitary dialoguings with oneself." Then she went to the door and called Mrs. Battle.

Mrs. Battle was never far distant. She had been as useful to Sir Golf as the old warming-pan watch he carried in his waistcoat pocket; and now she was to be as useful to Diana. She had been lady housekeeper to Sir Golf, if such a term could be applied to the domestic arrangements of the Court, which consisted of

an ancient male and female factotum who had joined hands for the sake of conveniency below-stairs.

Mrs. Battle had been Sir Golf's butt and sole source of amusement indoors.

"The only fault I can find with you, most estimable Battle," he used to say—when, dinner ended, he would sink into the arm-chair which had a trick of holding its occupants—"is this: you won't rise. No salmon floundering in that river over there has ever, in the long run, resisted my bait, but I've never succeeded in getting so much as a surface agitation out of you."

Whereupon the inestimable Mrs. Battle would smile, and say, "Sir Golf! Sir Golf!" and then sighing placidly, "Sir Golf! Sir Golf!"

Mrs. Battle always wore homespuns; she wore home manufactures on principle. She

needed no Lady Bective to stir up the *esprit de corps* in her gentle mind. She was in a "homespun" now, though its tint was sombre ; for she mourned Sir Golf.

Mrs. Battle, like many extremely amiable people, had *one* ferocious point. It was this—he or she who despised their nationality. "My husband was an Englishman," she would say ; "my mother, father, aunts, uncles, grandfathers, grandmothers," and here she fell away from her generations and gave way to genealogical pantings, and, generally speaking, left her audience to fill in the rest ; her audience, for the most part, consisting of Mrs. Bovin or Miss Edwards, the doctor's sister.

Mrs. Battle panted slightly as she entered the room ; she was stout, and hurry of movement induced panting. The panting merged into a comfortable sigh as she took her usual

seat in the deep recess of the old-fashioned fireplace.

“From whence comes your unruffled calm, Mrs. Battle?” said Diana. “Occasionally it’s instructive to dive beneath the exterior into the interior to examine the roots of other natures. Let me examine yours. I’ve been one short week at the Court, and each day Mrs. Battle has presented the same unvarying front. ’Tis not so with Nature; each day, each moment, she varies; the light creeping down the mountain sides at noon, and the shadows creeping down the same mountains at even, change its aspect from grave to gay, or gay to grave. But with you, morning, noon, and night make not the slightest difference. In Italy physiognomies vary ten thousand times within twelve hours. Take Marcia, my maid—she was all stilettoes and smiles. Mrs. Battle, did you ever learn the Catechism?”

“Of course I did,” said Mrs. Battle, “and everything else that’s thoroughly English.”

“*Bravissimo*,” said Diana, continuing her restless walk up and down the room; “may I put you through it?”

Mrs. Battle smoothed her hair placidly, and smiled benignly. The Golfs had ever been thus, and if you did not take them as you found them, then you must find them as you took them—which was the deepest piece of philosophy Mrs. Battle’s grey matter had ever shaped.

“What is your name?”

“Martha, Miss Beauchamp, so named after my great-grandmother on the maternal side.”

“N. or M.? M. has it. Did you ever compare the English and Scotch Catechisms? You had better not. They open fire so very differently. What are your likes and dislikes? I will be the key.

“ You like to ‘ purr ’ and to be ‘ purred ’ at. You were born without claws—I declare it—and the phantasm of other people’s claws has never crossed your imagination; your imagination as yet lies dormant, and no spring-tide is likely to awake it; so rest thee well, thou baleful or most blessed of gifts, the subtle powerful sense which clothes everybody and everything in its own strange mantlings.

“ Martha Battle, *promise* me this; place your hand on your thigh, like Jacob of old, and vow your vow, that you will *never* leave me. You rest me. Yes, it is restful to live with a wholesome soul—wholesome as bread, of which we never tire. I have seen so much unwholesomeness in women. When I pant for the streams of my heart to flow fresh and pure, I go to Nature, and stretch out my hands towards it. As yet I seem to know God but through Nature. If the flowers and

the streams and the woods are so fair, what must He be? So I know Him in His works; I've approached no nearer as yet. Sometimes in Florence, when examining the petals of an asphodel, I've cried out, 'Make me pure and divinely careless as these creations of Thine hand.' These my prayers, my only prayers. This my nearest approach to communion with the Infinite.

"Then with finite beings I've floated on the surface of society, touched extended finger-tips, and extended finger-tips to be touched in return. I've dived beneath the surface of society, and watched life's aquarium at work and at play, and yet the desire for friendship has never stirred within me. So long as the winds can carry my secrets, and the sun kiss my lips, and the flowers whisper of revelations yet to come, and Leone and Muscatel lick my hands, what do I want with

friendship, so called ? Some have said, there is too much ice about me ; but to-night I feel aglow with a tropical sun. Mr. Bovin has given me an *aim*, an *object*, a *goal*—the redemption of this Court.”

Mrs. Battle held up ten fingers, shaped like wickets ; but her countenance portrayed no horror, such as upraised hands generally carry.

“ That’s right,” said Diana, “ ’tis thus you encourage me. Our hands are subtle members, equal to our brains, in their own line, as Mr. Bovin would say. London will be the scene of my activities, Mr. Cantilupe the medium of my activities. The Philothea told me to go to him if I required information on any subject or floating in a new capital. In Rome, or Florence, I never lacked an audience ; London may be more critical, it can hardly be so artistic.”

"Recitations don't pay," said Mrs. Battle, looking into the fire.

"*Cela depend*," said Diana.

"I don't know French," said Mrs. Battle, still looking into the fire.

"Don't know French, and say so! No wonder you are wholesome, no wonder you look calm," cried Diana delightedly. "You are a corrective to an uprising vision."

"The uprising vision was maliciously asked by a friend—'Do you remember your *premier baiser*?' The malicious one meanwhile negligently turning over the leaves of the valse so named. My uprising vision, standing on the quicksands of an educational confession, *bowed* with a *finesse* worthy of relegating her to diplomatic wifehood—*bowed*, and thus veiled her ignorance."

"English is the only language worth knowing," said Mrs. Battle.

“Behold her!” said Diana, as if addressing an audience, “behold her! An English lady, girt about with white giants, only to be approached by an invasion of aëronauts from the other side. Recitations *don’t* pay! Recitations *shall* pay! *Sha’n’t* and *shall*, an ugly, sinful couple, are they not? Yet what thew and sinew, what bludgeons and daggers, and various implements down to a thief’s skeleton key! Martha Battle, light a candle here and there, and listen to the throb of Shakespeare’s soul—that wonderful soul of his, now aglow with the splendours of an orient sun, and now dark with the darkness of driving storms.”

Mrs. Battle sighed placidly as she rose and did Miss Beauchamp’s bidding; then sank into her chair again, and with meek, upraised eyes prepared herself for an exhibition of some sort.

Framed in one of the arched windows at the

end of the long room, Diana seemed already to have merged her personality in that of the poet's conception. Her voice rang out clear and impelling, hurrying you along with the resistless force of her own impassioned rendering; her figure lent itself to each expression of her words; her countenance mirrored the changeful words of each varied scene; and her eyes, filled with the electric currents of the forces which swayed her, seemed a recitation in themselves. Surely this was genius uttering genius.

Mrs. Battle, sitting blinking in the wax-lights, felt herself in the presence of a novel being. But then she was a Beauchamp, and the Beauchamps were rare. Still no Beauchamp within her recollection had been so rare as this Diana. There must be something in race, or there must be something in education, or there must be something in some-

thing; and then Mrs. Battle relapsed into dimness.

“Recitations *shall* pay,” said Diana, throwing herself negligently into Sir Golf’s arm-chair, and clasping her hands carelessly about her neck.

CHAPTER III.

A QUEST.

*“ O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail
All pall'd in crimson samite, and around
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings, and eyes.”*

“ MUST I die, Edwards ? ”

The speaker was a man in the prime of life—a man, though sick unto death, yet goodly to look upon.

“ Life and death are not in my hands, Sir Blaise.”

“ I will know Him in whose hands they are, should I recover,” said the sick man, uprising from the pillow by sheer force of inflexible will. “ If I die now, I cry with Voltaire, ‘ I’m

about to take a leap in the dark. He who puts his horse at a "dyke" in the dark is surely mad.' O God! I have been mad!"

Mr. Edwards was silent. He was not a physician of souls.

"Have they shot Nell?"

"Yes; her life was sheer agony."

"Poor Nell!" and here a light broke over the suffering face of Sir Blaise, which, if it was not love, was akin to it. Then a deep groan was wrung from him as pain took the mastery, then unconsciousness.

Mr. Edwards applied restoratives. The restoratives availed. Two hours of mortal agony passed. Mr. Edwards moistened those parched lips, and bathed that brow on which the veins stood out like the tendrils of a vine, knotted and twisted with pain, with the controlling, yet tender touch of sympathy.

Mr. Edwards was not a physician of souls,

but he was an arch-physician of bodies. The hours grew to night, and at last Sir Blaise fell into fitful slumber. Not till then did Mr. Edwards's expression vary from fixed gravity to ease. Stooping down, he swept those penetrating eyes of his over Sir Blaise's features, and murmured, "He will pull through."

*

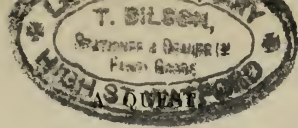
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Vows made on sick-beds, or when Death has laid a finger on us, are seldom kept. Where are the nine? is repeated over and over again in the experience of each of us. Where are the nine? Out once again with the summer winds, whispering glad mystic breathings about us; out amidst the starry blossoms and the sun-kissed fruits, plucking June roses, and marvelling at the jug-jug of the nightingale. Our vows, where are they? *Gone!* Yes, gone with the feverish dreams of yesternight—gone to echo amidst the



haunted spots of earth. Gone where all that has perished untimely finds a grave.

Sir Blaise is not as the nine, he is as the one ; he has returned to give thanks, or, rather, he has set out on his quest—but, like many others, he has lost his way.

All the county was distressed when Sir Blaise Panmure was carried insensible from the hunting-field. The distress showed itself after the usual form—an epidemic of paste-board and a flotilla of notes ; but no one was admitted to the presence of Sir Blaise.

Two months had passed since the accident, and Sir Blaise was as well again as he had ever been. Yet no persuasive message or winning inquiry had availed to open the doors of Whitefriars to friend or acquaintance. “Tell them, one and all, Vizard,” he had said to his confidential valet, “I am off on a quest, and till I find the Beatific Vision I can see no one.”

Whereupon Vizard, who worshipped Sir Blaise, had given way to absolute tears in the privacy of his own room; for no one should share his sorrowful belief that Sir Blaise would never recover his accident. He was so strange—so unlike what he had been; and so Vizard made his excuses, framing them now in plush and now in gold, now in wood and now in metal, and showing a pictorial imagination in the arrangement of these excuses.

And Sir Blaise set out on his quest—a quest the thoughtful of all ages have set out on, from Odin upwards, because the problems of life and death oppress them, because the inevitable is beckoning with too ghastly a gesture unless the strange future can be decked with some sweet sprays from Hope's ever-beauteous garden, unless they can find some safe and happy anchorage for their tossed and wearied souls. Some travel many

leagues and climb many staircases before the star hath led them to the little Babe of Bethlehem; some try first one philosophy and then another, and look into many creeds and divers cults, before, with exultations trampling on pain, they clasp the feet of the crucified Christ.

Whitefriars was the estate adjoining Beauchamp Court, and for centuries it had looked down with all the complacent grandeur even bricks and mortar can display on the palpable ruin at its side,—with its grass-grown walks, moss-covered stones, and disconsolate shutters, which, like eyes which hold a tragic past, looked the type of the wreck within.

On the magnificent terrace which sentinelled the front aspect of Whitefriars the Argus-eyed peacocks sunned themselves, and strutted conspicuously, breathing pomp, in juxtaposition to the melancholy hoots of the owls, which had made their dwelling-place amidst the ivy now

much too prolific at Beauchamp, and the mysterious bats which flitted about the neglected walks with dismal flappings.

The lawns and *parterres* at Whitefriars were clipped and docked like a French poodle or Polo pony; the *pleasaunce* would have accorded with the stately steps of wigged gallants and hooped ladies in the reign of Queen Bess; those walks were squared out for grandiloquent speeches of a past day.

The home farm was a model, and the stables might have been a national boast. Such contrasts seem like the irony of fate—full of the mockings and gibings of a transmitted plague, which dodges the footsteps of recurring generations, and avenges itself on the profuseness which will deck some natures, which will give and never take, and which twists its pocket inside out, and still smiles through all, if with rueful relish of the smile.

Perhaps Sir Blaise Panmure would have twisted his pockets inside out if he had been a "town man"; but he abhorred London and all towns without distinction; loved horses, dogs, and sport; hated fashion and sham; had never read a novel, so was Arcadian in his simplicity as regards women; in fact, he cared but little about them, though they cared a good deal about him. He viewed them as delicate china—too fragile for much use; as flowers, which a too ardent sun might wither at a glance; as creatures to be approached with exceeding reverence.

Lady Panmure had been one of this fragile growth. All dimly Sir Blaise remembered her, and the remembrance was tinged with worship. Memory recalled the exceeding care with which his father, Sir Dyke, had dug about and watered his conversation when addressing her, relegating all strong expressions

to the galleries of his mental arrangements, and becoming a metamorphosed man for the very few minutes in each day he spent with this Sèvres china wife he had married. Sir Blaise could not imagine a lady who would not be as his mother had been—fine, extremely fine—flexible as textures which pass through rings, wrought delicately as spider's web.

So years rolled by, and no Lady Panmure reigned at Whitefriars—not for lack of hardihood on the ladies' part; for, notwithstanding the fragility of Sèvres china, ladies can be as tough as earthenware, and they had in more than one instance ventured perilously far on the quicksands of half-disclosed sentiments, which, in full revelation, were the white rose of confession.

Sir Blaise was so lovable—surely he could be loving. And Sir Blaise—ah! he stroked

his moustache, called his dogs about him, and frowned, half puzzled at the stoutness of Sèvres china; and then the frown lightened into a half-smile, as he viewed a favourite hunter, and murmured to himself how women babble, and they don't know what they say—how should they?

And thus once more the sex were reinstated in the cabinet, of value priceless; but, as yet, no Lady Panmure reigned at Whitefriars—or ever will, was whispered in the servants' hall. Only Vizard checked that growing whisper by closing one eye and opening the other, and looking so alarmingly prophetic, and prophetically obscure, that it was felt, though not acknowledged by the household, that the secret springs and watchwords and passes, which are the peculiar signs by which the initiated pass in and out, and sit down within those inner cycles of a being,

were known, nay, *must* be known, to Vizard—that juggler movement of the eyelid meant oceanic depths.

How often does a strange smile, an odd twinkle, or an incipient shrug, open up a thousand outlets and inlets, leading down roads where, turning from right to left, you find no bourn. How often does one human being flagellate another with no weapon more deadly than these civilized movements of lip, eye, or shoulder—which yet are more eloquent of savagery than poignards or stilettos, in so far that subtlety is ever more dangerous than open warfare!

And as we grow more civilized, alas! we grow more subtle, more sure of aim—more conscious that the most deadly wounds are those which no physician can heal, no ointment mollify.

Knowledge is power: and so language becomes

the chosen instrument with which we play upon the heart-strings of each other, and force out those cries which ring *dumb* through the immensity of space, and only wake an echo in the heart of Infinitude, Who is infinitely kind.

CHAPTER IV.

CONTRASTS.

*“ Here, too, all hush’d below the mellow moon,
Save that one rivulet from a tiny cave
Came lightning downward, and so split itself
Among the roses, and was lost again.”*

THE estates which are passing under our notice were situated in the right pleasant county of Hereford—a county prolific of all things—corn, cattle, rivers, meadows, May-blush of blossom, and September-blush of fruitage. “A county which,” writes Camden, “for yielding of corne, and feeding of cattle, is in all places most fruitful, and therewith passing well furnished with all things neces-

sary for man's life; insomuch as it would scorene to be considered seconde to any other county throughout all England for fertility of soil; and, therefore," saith he, "for wheat, wool, water, it yieldeth to no shire in England. And verily it hath also divers notable rivers, Wye, Lug, and Munow, which, after they have watered the most flowering meadows and fruitful corne fields, at length meet together, and in one channel passe on to the Severne sea."

Whitefriars stood some seven miles to the north of Leominster. The modern castellated mansion retained but few traces of its ancient architecture; but here and there the owner could point to the handiwork of the past—a walled garden, and *pleasaunce* to the rear, and an ancient chapel which no supplanting touch had altered. Beauchamp Court, from the purest point of view, was far more in-

teresting, as no wealthy Beauchamp had been able, if inclined, to profane its antiquity, and the only architects who had meddled with it for centuries were the noiseless, yet ceaselessly active, workmen whom Time employs—whose crumbling touch is yet full of loving reverence.

Somehow the sun seemed to beat down on Beauchamp with a greater fervency of love than on the stately mansion at its side, and the shadows linger more regretfully about the quaint doorway and the mouldering gateway with its mutilated coat-of-arms; and if the crows and rooks did jabber too pronouncedly now and then of their strange adventures in their flights amidst the chimney-pots of Leominster, or wanderings farther or nearer as they listed, the blackbird's mellow whistle and the thrush's kingly note made melody, to which high angels might listen, as they built

their nests in the grand old trees, and strutted on the daisy-covered lawns in search of forage. The snails crawled about with indifferent interest as to their shells—no tyrant heel would crush them; and the bees wooed the pollens from morn till night with amorous buzz. As for the butterflies, they lived and died secure—collection hunters were unknown here—a very Eden they had found. All wild creatures that the march of civilization has left seemed to haunt the grounds by right of law; and Diana, who had now come to join them, seemed not the least untamed for all her culture.

CHAPTER V.

AMIDST DEAD THINGS.

*“ But even while I drank the brook and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.”*

WHO loves lumber-rooms? To some natures they are as seductive as an old curiosity shop, and when these lumber-rooms are to be found in ancient dwellings they are indeed like a story in the Arabian Nights. You may not come across gold or jewels, but you are on ground bewitched with the bewitchment of tradition. Here you can sit cross-legged like a mystic Turk, and weave endlessly; here you can call up vision after vision, and tread the

streets of dead cities, and gaze at the kings and queens who inhabited them.

Yes, there is a spell in these speechful things, which dead hands have laid by ; there is a dumb eloquence which will enthrall you, and hold you silent many an hour.

Here is an ancient robe ; 'tis brocade—we see no such brocade now—'tis full of shifting tints.

“ What hours of gladness are enwrapped amidst your folds, or was she sad for all her brave attire—she who flitted up and down this very staircase thus robed ? ” thought Diana, as with a dreamful sigh she laid it back with its sprigs of rosemary on its empty bodice.

Now the hilt of a sword attracted her, and she drew it from its sheath, and shuddered. It was no plaything ; dented, rusty, scratched—it had history written on its steely face ; it

bore the brand of Cain, it had surely tasted human blood.

Here was a doll—a wooden thing without legs or arms—yet, doubtless, the most dearly loved of all the treasures of some bygone child. The pathos of childhood consists in its tenacious clinging to the mutilated and shabby; it has less liking for those frilled and furbelowed darlings which a sticky finger can damage hopelessly, or a smothering kiss denude of all its paint. Diana dropped a tear on the wooden doll. She had sighed over the glorious fabric, shuddered at the cruel sword; but emotion stirred at the toy, and yet she knew not why.

Now some curious Florentine fabric attracted her; the Beauchamps had been roving men, all save Sir Golf, but the salmon kept him quiet. It was like a glimpse of Italia's skies to Diana; she pressed her lips to the stuff, and held it to

her heart. "Italy, my foster-mother, some child of yours busied himself with this creation at the loom!"

Diana fell to measuring her treasure. How many yards were here? What draperies she would make! those sombre dining-room curtains should be replaced by this wonderful feast of colour. Yes, the Court should wake up at the touch of an artiste, for Diana *was* an artiste in every fibre of her being. Colour was like the peal of a bell to her; it had unspoken prayer in its amazing glories of hue and tint; it was the embodiment of a celestial vision.

She was quitting the lumber-room with the fabric in one great pile on her arms, which were strong and supple as any Greek statue's—for Diana's form was moulded like one of the nymphs or fauns of the artist's studio—when a picture, with its face to the

wall, caught her attention. Pausing, she slipped her roll of stuff to the ground, and turned it to the light. It was covered with dust, and black with age, but neither dust nor age could hide the depths of colour which the touch of a *maestro* had left on the canvas. It was the head and bust of a woman—a woman out of whose eyes looked a great sorrow and a great repentance, and round the dusky beauty of whose head a faint nimbus shone.

Once more Diana slid to the floor; she “knelt upon her knees,” and looked long at those haunting eyes, which made that canvas tell its tale for all time. The brocaded robe had spoken, the rusty sword had spoken, the wooden doll had spoken; yet the face of this woman held her as none of these dead things had—with an overpowering sense of the mystery of evil and the mystery of repentance.

How long Diana knelt before the picture she took no count; she was penetrated with a touch of genius. By whom was that *living* woman painted? She *spoke* from the canvas, she must so *speak* as long as the world endures. Surely this was a masterpiece; yet the canvas was turned to the wall, as if those eyes must whisper forth their secret to the stones and plaster. Was this a Vandyke? a Rembrandt? a Raphael? a Giotto? which—

“Miss Beauchamp!” Mrs. Battle’s unemotional voice, which had a bah, bah, for all times, awakened her from her reverie. “Luncheon is ready. You must be frozen amongst this rubbish. Don’t you find all this dead stuff most depressing? Do come down to the warmth and light; do leave this rat-hole.”

Diana was silent; she only indicated with a

wave of her hand the picture, as if this were sufficient to enchain Mrs. Battle also.

“Horried with the dust! I don’t wonder, Miss Beauchamp; look at that frame, fine *growing* soil.” Mrs. Battle smiled; she was treading on the confines of a shadowy joke. “What *dreadful* eyes the poor lady has, to be sure! No wonder she was sent up here—such an awful stare in them, they follow one, I declare. Oh dear, I should have a nightmare, I’m sure, if I looked at her long. What a heap of rubbish there is up here, to be sure! and how it multiplies! Rubbish is the only thing that *does* multiply, I believe. Dear, dear—to be sure—to be sure.”

Then Diana looked at Mrs. Battle, much as some sage might look at a babbling child.

To appreciate genius, the breath of genius must, at least, have hovered about you. *It* has taken you by the hand, and whispered

something of its secret in your ear. Florence, the Asphodel of our world, had led Diana up and down her streets, and away through her olive valleys. Florence had shown her all her glorious children, wrought in stone and metal and colour. Florence had whispered of aspiration, and Diana had kindled as at the touch of inspiration.

The sweeping shadows of that matchless drapery, the living soul in those wonderful eyes, the dusky glory of the sorrow-smitten yet heavenward glancing face, with the faintly outlined nimbus like a rainbow promise—*all, all* was lost on Mrs. Battle. It was a picture covered with dust, black with age, fit for lumber, rooms—*nothing more*.

“Come,” said Diana, “let us discourse on home-made bread and chicken *fricassée*; I’m hungry”; yet she made no pretence of movement, only slid nearer the picture. She might

have been telling her beads—there was a great awe in her face, and a great reverence. God-like genius had evoked it.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Battle, gathering her skirts about her, and looking round with protesting vexation at such a medley of rubbish, “let us go to luncheon.”

“I will follow you,” said Diana; “leave me for one more minute; I’m doing homage.”

“Doing what?” said Mrs. Battle, confusedly, “doing what?” as in hopeless mental disorder she pattered down the steep spiral staircase which led up to the “rat-hole.”

Many minutes passed before Diana rose, and when at last she turned away from her meditation and followed Mrs. Battle’s steps, there was a light on her face as though she had been walking on some sun-kissed spot where mystic flowers bloom, and birds who

had soared so high that they had caught some angel notes, sang wondrous songs. She had been where genius catches its inspiration—she had been in rare company.

CHAPTER VI.

OUT GRAZING.

*“ Thus in the seas of life enlisted,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal myriads live alone.”*

“ THIS is bread,” said Diana, as she faced Mrs. Battle at luncheon, “ not a *stone*.”

“ A stone ? ” said Mrs. Battle ; “ I should think not.”

“ I mean to say it is real bread, it is full of corn—a gracious product.”

Mrs. Battle smiled comfortably. She wished Miss Beauchamp would always talk of bread or cabbages ; she was so at home in a kitchen garden, or at a harvest-home.

“I must say, Jane can bake as well as any Herefordshire woman,” said Mrs. Battle.

“Jane is the wife of John, is she not?” said Diana.

“Yes. I hope you will not alter the domestic arrangements, Miss Beauchamp. Jane and John are a handy couple, and very respectable. Sir Golf valued them.”

“Ah, they have ‘clomb’ the heights of respectability and sat down to view the strugglers below, and have added to respectability handy ways. I see no reason why I should displace them from their altitudes, Mrs. Battle. *Respectability* wears a patched coat worn threadbare, and stands by the road-side, with hands which will not beg—that is one aspect of respectability. Then we have the other. It inhabits a substantial villa, and wears shiny broadcloth, and clothes its face in ‘*smirkiness*.’ It has a frown, though, for the grimy hand

which ventures to find its way to the brass knocker, and for those mud-stained boots which would dare to tread its Kidderminster carpets. Oh, respectability, 'tis some people's creed."

"You will allow Jane and John to stay on," said Mrs. Battle.

"If they desire it. Handy respectability is not to be lightly dispensed with." Then Diana laughed, looking askew at Mrs. Battle.

"You see I know all about Jane's mother, father, brothers, sisters, and aunts," said Mrs. Battle, breathlessly threading her beloved genealogies; "likewise John's father, mother, brother, sister, aunt, on the mother's side. I was to have seen his uncle; only, poor man (he was a woodcutter), the very day I was to see him, the branch of a tree gave way with him, and down he fell, and was carried to the hospital, and there he died. It's so very

necessary in these queer days to know all about the stock from which you take your servants—it's not sufficient to know *her* or *him*."

"What shall we do when servitude is relegated to tradition?" said Diana. "The streams of knowledge are becoming very accessible; even the Arabs who haunt the corners of our streets and the by-paths and the slums will by-and-by prick up attentive ears, and quench a thirst—which is growing upon them—for knowledge, at the drinking fountain hard by.

"Passing through London on my way here the other day, the cabby, for some reason of his own, took me through all the back ways; and, after my usual fashion, I tried to pick up some stray ears of corn, which would build up this never-to-be-completed educational fabric. We entered a street more ill-favoured than any, but at the corner of it stood a drinking

fountain, the gift of Mrs. Jordan—suggestive name!—and wearied horses were quenching their thirst at its God-sent streams. I thought by-and-by some more Mrs. Jordan's may be raised up to build free schools for men and women at every corner of our densely populated cities; there will be proportionate results."

"Education has a levelling tendency," said Mrs. Battle, as she grazed on laboriously and patiently amidst the green pastures of a lobster salad.

"Unquestionably," said Diana. "Culture will take the wind out of the sails of the most heady duchess who has no book-lore. Culture is a wondrous weapon; its hilt is as precious as the hilt of Excalibur. Ah! Mrs. Battle, as King Arthur said—

'The old order changeth, yielding place to new.'

Who can say whether kings and queens and

courtiers will be here to-morrow? The masses are awaking from the sleep of ignorance. They begin to understand good and evil. When knowledge works like summer heat within their brains, and bears its blossomings and its lusty fruits, who knows but that they may rise and claim their equality—the equality of descent from a common father, ‘the Adam’—the equality of culture derived from a common source—and the equality of wealth derived from the exercise of brains? Everybody is a lady—it’s the pet term for the flower-seller at the corner of a thoroughfare and the fitter in a Bond Street draper’s.

“Conservatism may still mildly talk of the young person behind the counter; but—shall I say, alas!—a shrill clarion is drowning that remonstrating voice. The young person dresses as a lady—better than some ladies. She is conversant with various languages, she can touch

one or two instruments, and, by virtue of her varied accomplishments and incomparable get-up, she calls herself a *lady*.

“By-and-by, *we* shall reject that term as obsolete, and *woman* will be the most dignified and coveted term of distinction: we shall return to primitive days.”

“Sir Golf was Conservative—all the Beauchamps have been Tories,” said Mrs. Battle, as she grazed on amongst those delectable pastures.

Her countenance was unruffled. Diana might have been painting sunsets or moonlights. Upheavals and craters did not come in Mrs. Battle’s way. The rise and fall of empires were to her like the rise and fall of temperatures—subjects to be mildly concerned about when salads were out of the way. Nothing more.

“Conservatives, were they?” said Diana.

“I am nothing ; the world will fight its way into light, whether there be Conservatives or Liberals at the wheel. It’s an age of jostle,” she continued, rising, and meditatively examining those gloomy curtains which were to exchange places with the Florentine fabric. “Yet though, as befits me, I am nothing in political bias, if ’tis Conservatism to glory in the stillness of this old Court, I do so glory. This stillness will possess me by-and-by ; and if you say to me, ‘What is it thou hast seen, or what hast thou heard ?’ I shall make answer : ‘I heard the water lapping on the crag, and the long ripple washing in the reeds ! Italy fills me with dreams of Art ; Herefordshire with quaint fancies of Nature. And now I must write to Mr. Cantilupe—he who is to make my fortune ; from poetry to prose. *Telle est la vie.* Pardon, pardon. *Such is life.* You are English, and I—*I am nothing.*”

CHAPTER VII.

MR. CANTILUPE.

“Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey.”

MR. CANTILUPE had what appraisers term a *bijou* residence in M—— Street, Grosvenor Square. Nothing in the shape of matter took root there but the rare and curious; this fact was significant of the man. Everything was stamped with individuality, everything had a history, a romance, attached to its personality (if such a term may be applied to things).

Mr. Cantilupe's occupation or calling was not calendared amongst professions or professionals. Yet he had a calling, and to that calling he owed his knowledge of peoples

and their handiwork, and to that calling he owed the indefinable strangeness which touched you with an indefinable sensation in his presence.

Did you require an impossible introduction, Mr. Cantilupe was your man. Did you sigh for that masterpiece of Giotto, Mr. Cantilupe would make arrangements by which you should possess your desire by noon to-morrow. Did you hunger for the forelocks of those Philistines, leave the matter in those ringed serpentine supple fingers which conveyed so much. Were you sick unto death, Mr. Cantilupe had an exorcising power; some forms of malady had been known to depart beneath the passes of his numerical calculations. Were you desirous of settling to a career, one glance from those strange orbs of his, and you were relegated to the high or low places of this swinging ball. Were you curious about the

formation of your "crown," Mr. Cantilupe, as his fingers glide with expressive emphasizing inquiry over your seat of learning, will soon tell you how much of the poet, orator, philosopher, wrangler, or metaphysician there is about you; also how beautiful, or how deformed, your soul is.

Mr. Cantilupe, with these mysterious advantages over other people—advantages which dwarf muscular powers, and even mental abilities, kinged it over men and women, whatever their nationality; for all languages, dead and living, seemed to be known by him. For him fine gold poured in—not niggardly, or with halting movements and melancholy countings, but eagerly, precipitately, with bows and scrapes. This arch-Jesuit must be propitiated. He knew all about everybody and everybody's "cup-board"; and he could make those skeletons live and grin. Bah! whence did that hideous

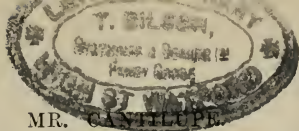
skeleton start into horrible life the other day, and stare in letters of black and white from all the leading newspapers?

Mr. Cantilupe had been seen to smile at Lord B——, and when Mr. Cantilupe smiled, might the skies protect you, for nothing else would. How much Mr. Cantilupe played on the savagery of the supposedly civilized peoples of Europe, it would be impossible to say. He had obtained complete mastery of the gamut of human nature, and he could play on that gamut like an Orphée, or a fiend; he knew the fascination the weird and fantastical yet hold for mankind, the power which something unreadable yet holds over the imagination. And he laughed in his sleeve at the superstition which yet beclouds even trained, versed, professing Christians, in the matter of witchcraft, which yet mumbles and mutters under a red cloak, which yet consults the stars or

believes in ghosts, or hears a knocking, or turns a table.

With such an inward *entourage*, we should expect something odd in the outward *entourage*, and while Mr. Cantilupe is scanning Diana's letter, which had just arrived, and had been handed to him by an automaton negro—for Mr. Cantilupe had a man-servant who stood at the hall door and opened it, and walked upstairs, and held letters and parcels in those Ethiopian hands—a mechanical man, all springs, but harmless; who, as Mr. Cantilupe remarked to an alarmed visitor, “will neither bite nor devour you, and can keep a secret.” We will sketch him.

He is standing by the mantelpiece, a tall slight man, lithe of limb, and with the grace of a panther lurking in his movements. His hair is prematurely grey, for his face is young; this lends a wonderful brilliancy to his eyes,



and a peculiar clearness to his skin. But we must examine his eyes, because all his power seems to lie there. They seem to be the outward manifestation of his inward peculiarities; they are long, wide-open eyes, and steady as the planets; they fix you, and beneath them you pale or redden or suffocate; they stir you; even very unimaginative people—people who are blind to all phenomena—like to get away from them and sit down afar. A grey moustache half reveals thin chiselled lips—lips which might be cruel, never sensuous. The contour of his face is severely classic.

After reading Diana's note, Mr. Cantilupe strolled to an oval mirror at the end of the room—a mirror surmounted by an eagle—and looked at himself therein; the gaze at his visioned self was prolonged, meditative, scrutinizing—not the enamoured glance of the vain youth in the lake, whose fabled history

has been carried down the stream of Time in the white garments of Narcissus; nor the fussy peerings of a Mr. Dally, who is much exercised about the last thing in ties, or the irritable condition of his complexion; but the intensity of a gaze directed inwards, which would read an answer to a query; the steady gaze of absorption, complete, entire, unreserved. What the mirror answered Mr. Cantilupe, who shall say? He passed his hand over its glassy surface, as if to obliterate his own image, then returned to the mantelpiece and re-read Diana's letter.

Shortly after he went to a cabinet, a priceless thing, with a tragic history which Mr. Cantilupe knew, and none other; took out some fragrant paper monogramed with a strange device, culled from Egyptian pyramids and encircled with a crown—Mr. Cantilupe owned to no generations; he would have sunk amongst

the herd with genealogies—and wrote an answer to Diana. It read thus :

“You are the Great Diana, and already I see, as in a mirror, crowds falling down before you, as they did before that Great Diana of the Ephesians.

“Your inspirations are culled from that fruitful mother of genius, *Nature*. All who would join the world of art or letters must study her profoundly ; first of all in her mystic breathings, interpreted through the medium of her matchless productions, and secondly in her offspring, the children of men.

“To *you* I will be at home on Tuesday at the hour you mention, half-past three. You must come *alone* ; I see but one at a sitting.

“CANTILUPE.

“M—— Street, Grosvenor Square,

“January 29th.”

CHAPTER VIII.

OURS.

“Shall he then, cutting the stays which hold him fast to the social state, put out to sea with no guidance but his genius?”

THE county people were much exercised about Miss Beauchamp—should they call, or should they not call? The question was vigorously discussed at various luncheon tables within a radius of a few miles from Beauchamp Court.

“I think *not*,” said Lady Masters to Francisca and Cecilia, as they discussed the tiresome proposition for the second time; “Miss Beauchamp has come out to a career—her recitations will be ‘sandwiched’ about all over

London this spring. She has left our circle, though for the sake of Sir Golf, that lapsed but charming man of my young days (before he took to salmon), I have admitted a question on the subject."

"The *litterati* will gather about her," said Cecilia pensively, "and she will find them far more of her feather than we." Cecilia painted a little, and sang a little, and had a dim admiration for her patron saint. She was considered the most artistic of her family, and Lady Masters had a nightmare of an errant poet, with long hair and strange ways, floating down on Cecilia one day; so she had to be a little stern now and then, and endeavour to give Cecilia what she needed—backbone.

"It is well she has Mrs. Battle to look after her," said Lady Masters; "Mrs. Battle is a highly respectable woman, her father was a small squire, and unfortunate."

“A small, unfortunate squire,” said Francisca, who was supposed to be rather slangy, though this troubled Lady Masters less than the poetic sensibilities of Cecilia; “What a caution!”

“True, my dear; the misfortunes of others are a caution to us, and we take warning, and invest our funds more carefully, and so on.”

“How charming it would be to deck a barge with white samite, and float about with bags of gold, which the swans could carry to those who needed help,” said Cecilia, a faint flush creeping upwards like the dawn on her transparent skin.

Lady Masters looked reprovngly at Cecilia, and said, in measured tones, “Have some *filet de veau*, Cecilia; white meat is best for the complexion.”

“We shall do away with the intolerable vulgarity of food, I hope, soon,” said Cecilia

languidly. "Mr. Languedoc says æstheticism is a self-feeding development."

"Mr. Languedoc is a very foolish young man," said Lady Masters.

"I met Miss Beauchamp yesterday," said Francisca, glancing at her mother, with humorously arched eyebrows. "I'm not sure I did not offer to arrange the girth of her saddle. I was maliciously possessed with the intention of withholding this extract in a day's journeying; but mamma's settling the question was too much for my hoarded intelligence, and out it came. Yes, I met 'The Diana,' and she looks far more of a Philistine than I do—she is charming. She was trundling along on that old bay pony of Sir Golf's, which is blind of an eye, and has the staggers and the roarings; but she sat it like a—well—like an English-woman. We English *can* ride; few are our accomplishments, few our artistic developments, starved our imaginations,

but we can ride. Diana Beauchamp made that old bay cob look like a palfrey from enchanted woods."

"Describe her," said Cecilia breathlessly.

Lady Masters said nothing. When events pass out of your reach, silence is your only alternative—if you be wise.

"Describe! Who can describe? Descriptions had best be given over to signboard artists," said Francisca.

"Fill in the signboard," said Cecilia; "I'm curious."

"Her hair is flecked with gold, and her eyes are like leverage; she flashed ten thousand thank-you's to me, for I *did* strap up the girth; it had become loosened, and of course she had no groom. I was stumping along when I met 'The Diana.' Her upper lip—well, it's caught up in the clouds by the Loves, or the Muses. And her figure! I thought mine tolerable;

but the greatest of her charms consists in this—she is *posé*.”

“*Posé* on what?” said Lady Masters; “fixing her *pince nez*?”

“On her ruined estate, to be sure,” said Francisca laughing. “Nothing makes people so *posé* as the consciousness that their fortune must consist in their own attainments or achievements. We may be *posé* from borrowed surroundings; these swept away, where are we? She is *posé* because she is so extraordinarily gifted, we hear.”

“‘We hear’ and ‘they say,’ never a word of truth in either,” said Lady Masters; “but what passed between you?” And then she gave her silk dress the slightest shake in the world; she felt irritated, for both Cecilia and Francisca seemed to think the honour conferred was on Miss Beauchamp’s side rather than hers.

“Salutations ; nothing more. I took far more interest in her than she in me.”

“What do you desire me to do ?” said Lady Masters, after a long pause and another *diminuendo* shake of her silk dress.

“Call, like a love,” said Cecilia.

“Yes, like a popsie · mammiekins,” said Francisca. So the question was settled.

CHAPTER IX.

A DAY IN FEBRUARY.

“I am made immortal by apprehending my possession of incorruptible good.”

“As every pool reflects the image of the sun, so every thought and thing restores us an image and creature of the supreme good.”

“THREE dreadful days a-doing; we can’t compass our work under.” So said Diana to Mrs. Battle, as they rattled along in a nerve-shattering cab to the quiet rooms in Kensington which they had engaged during their stay in London; for on the following day Diana had to keep her appointment with Mr. Cantilupe.

“We might as well stay the week,” said Mrs. Battle; “the rooms are engaged for a week.”

“Dear soul,” said Diana, looking with a certain winsomeness at Mrs. Battle, which somehow rendered any term pleasant from her; “how I delight in you when you carry me on your ample shoulders! The accusative keys are yours, the banking accounts are yours; all I have to do is to courtesy to fame.”

February had just entered, and London showed a grimy face of expectancy. Diana felt too restless to sit down amidst the distressing details which make up the sum total of most apartments. A new phase was about to open before her—new interests and new hopes.

Leaving Mrs. Battle to make things comfortable, she soon wended her way to Kensing-

ton Gardens, and found herself listening delightedly to an early blackbird who could withhold his love-lore no longer. The air was soft, and a pale sun shining: the trees were full of promise. He had a pæan of praise within him; he must tell it out: and so he sang high up on a cedar tree, which, with many others, shows a melancholy desire for the native soil of Lebanon. "Ah! my blackbird," thought Diana, "if Kant saw Heaven in a swallow's eye, surely I hear Heaven in your note."

Wandering on, she passed old Kensington Palace, and fell to admiring the soft tints which age has left on the red bricks of which it is built. She passed out at a low gateway, lingering to admire some cherubs which are quite exquisitely rounded in limb—English *chefs-d'œuvre*. These cherubs hover over the doorway of an arbour which flanks this en-

trance to Kensington Gardens, and invites *les misérables* to be seated within its gloomy shadow.

Arbours—at all times the most unwholesome-looking retreats, where even “sweet lovers” must surely feel a creeping sense of impending woe—in *London* look more abject than elsewhere, for no roses climbing about them, or starry clematis, beckon you in with alluring promise of a downy hour. They stand up like paupers in a museum, surrounded by wealth that they dare not touch.

Now Diana is faced by a church, or is it a small cathedral? The door stands open, as church doors should. “This is like Italy,” she thought, as she entered; there the churches are always open, and some kneeling figures telling their beads. Kneeling, Diana gazed long at the eastern window. It was rich in colour, and the subject was one round which

the strongest hopes and fears of Christendom have gathered — the Passion of our Lord. The bowed form of the Christ, rocked in an agony of supplication beneath the ilex groves of Gethsemane, smote Diana with a sense of sin. Ah! corroding touch, is there one can say, “I know it not”? And then the remembrance of St. Augustine’s words flitted across her—“O Sacred Wounded Side, from whence flowed the two Sacraments”—“Bathe in *these* and be clean.” The blackbird was still singing in the cedar tree as Diana retraced her steps, but this time she did not notice his song. She was pondering over the magnetism of Faith.

Mrs. Battle greeted Diana with many exclamations of joy on her return. “I was quite alarmed about you, Miss Beauchamp, you were out so long; this big London is as full of snares as a field full of gin-traps. Is

your purse safe? You should carry it as I carry mine; it cuts two ways—being difficult to get at, it strangles the desire to spend; and as for a thief, he must needs be a cunning fellow who would find a pocket three materials deep. You look tired, dear heart. Sit down and rest you. Let me carry your bonnet upstairs, and I'll bring down your shoes."

"No, no," said Diana, "you are alluring. The primitive woman within me cries 'Yield!' But I've buried the primitive woman—I'm as rhythmic as the splash of waters. Besides, we are going to have an Emerson evening. You are not 'acquaint' with the American poets, or prose poets. You don't know what a delightful set they are, full of Old World cult and Young World life."

"Emerson!" murmured Mrs. Battle—"Emerson! I ought to know that name! Of course I

do! Mr. Emerson, of Leominster, the dentist. A most superior man. I'm sure the last time he was destroying a 'nerve' he kept me most thoroughly amused with his chitty-chatty talk—some relation, doubtless."

"I have not studied the Emerson tree," said Diana (whose eyes alone expressed laughter), "so I can't say whether its venerable branches spread across the Atlantic as far as Leominster; but I *can* say the mind of that gifted man branches out into the limitless, for he projects himself into space."

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Battle, looking to the adjustment of the band of a neat muslin arrangement she was manufacturing as a dressy addition for a possible Leominster tea-fight; "does he go up in a balloon, like those dashing gentlemen we read about?"

"Oh, Mrs. Battle," said Diana, "you are a hopeless pupil; I am afraid I shall be like

a nightmare to you. I know after I recited 'Lady Macbeth' you never slept at all. I saw it in every outline, when you descended to breakfast."

"I enjoyed it extremely," said Mrs. Battle tremulously; "it's true I did see Lady Macbeth standing by my bedside, with hands so red—so red; and it's true I sat up half the night staring—gasping—at her; but I enjoyed it extremely."

"Martha Battle, recitations are not for you; imagination has lain dormant so long that imagination when aroused is now but a nightcapped horror, and therefore it shall afflict you no more. I will confine my recitations to Mr. Cantilupe till I find a wider audience."

Mrs. Battle tried not to look pleased as she put a last triumphant stitch in that snowy throat arrangement.

CHAPTER X.

LET IT BE "RIZPAH."

*"Ah ! you that have lived so soft, what should you know of
the night ?*

*The blast, and the burning shame, and the bitter frost, and
the fright.*

*I have done it while you were asleep. You were only made
for the day ;*

*I have gather'd my baby together, and now you may go your
way."*

THE Ethiopian automaton startled Diana when in response to her ring he threw wide the doors of Mr. Cantilupe's residence, and then with sliding, gliding movements led the way to the library, where Mr. Cantilupe received his visitors. She had grasped the fact that he

was a machine made to order, though, after a moment's survey, and looked decidedly diverted at her reception, as the automaton softly closed the door, and glided once more to the hall.

Mr. Cantilupe, after the lapse of a few seconds, emerged from some draperies in a deep recess which seemed made for his reception, as it held no furniture, and the curtains draped space. It was thus he always came upon his visitors. To take people by surprise is almost always to lift the veil which holds the inmost sanctuary from your gaze. The momentary start, the entire aspect—you are in possession of the whole. The gladness, if gladness there be, is yours; the reverse, if it be there, is yours *also*.

The mystic appearance of Mr. Cantilupe startled Diana equally as much as the Ethiopian had; but she covered it with a graceful

"courtesy," for Diana had enough old-fashioned dignity about her, with all her Zingara ways, to have made her take easily to hoops and powdered hair, arranged like mountains of snow.

The swan-dip over, Mr. Cantilupe drew a chair (Louis XIV. workmanship) forward and ensconced Diana therein; then retired to the mantelpiece, and, leaning his small head on his taper fingers, gazed long and penetratingly at Diana in silence.

Whether he had cast a spell about her, or had evoked stillness, Diana knew not; but those extraordinary eyes absolutely checked speech. At last Mr. Cantilupe spoke—

"Miss Beauchamp, you have fulfilled my expectations; your recitations will be attended by the *doré* of either sex. You have now but to make your terms. Would you prefer a *salary*? Forgive the gross term. Or would

you rather depend upon the profits you may draw, merely making me your man of business ? ”

“ Do you mean to say you will engage me at a certain sum a week, and yourself make all the necessary arrangements of time and place ? ”

“ That is my meaning. ”

“ You know nothing of my capabilities,” said Diana ; “ how can you fix the price of my recitations ? ”

Mr. Cantilupe merely waved his hand, as if such questionings were *not* weighted with common sense.

“ Let me recite something,” said Diana, rising.

“ Let it be ‘ Rizpah,’ ” said Mr. Cantilupe, quitting the mantelpiece, and lowering the blinds so as to fill the room with a more mellow light.

" ' Rizpah, ' " said Diana, dreamily. " You have chosen a passionate wail—why ? "

" Because it finds an echo in the nineteenth century, " said Mr. Cantilupe.

Rising, Diana moved towards the curtains whence Mr. Cantilupe had made his appearance, and thus chose her background. In the few seconds which it had taken her to traverse the room, her very countenance seemed to have gathered the sob at the heart of the mother ; with the hunted expression in her eyes as in accents, which had the sough of the winds in their anguished depths, she commenced that song which will surely ring down the ages till the ages are no more—

*" Wailing, wailing, wailing, the wind over land and sea,
And Willie's voice in the wind, O mother, come out to me !
Why should he call me to-night, when he knows that
I cannot go ?
For the downs are as bright as day, and the full moon
stares at the snow."*

The passionate query in Diana's eyes seemed to bring before you the long stretch of downs, mantled white, and hushed beneath the round full stare of the moon, into yet more breathless stillness. Surely the ground was *dead*, and this was its *shroud*; surely never again at Spring's soft touch would the emerald green put forth, and the rabbits emerge from their holes.

And now the ghostly query rang in a horrified whisper at your ear—

"Anything fallen again? nay, what was there left to fall?"

*I have taken them home. I have numbered the bones
—I have hidden them all.*

*What am I saying, and what are you? Do you come
as a spy?*

*Falls! what falls? who knows? As the tree falls, so
must it lie."*

And yet again—

*"But the night has crept into my heart, and begun to
darken my eyes."*

If anything could add to the pathos of these matchless words, it was rung out in living, breathing life from Diana, the living exponent; the darkening heart whence those shadows were thrusting upwards to darken the eyes, and *there* to crouch through all the weary years.

Mr. Cantilupe had listened with bent brows, his mystic glances examining the carpet, though every now and then when the dramatic power of Diana reached those heights where reticence veils, he cast one strange transitory glance at her upturned face. He made no visible sign of pleasure as the recitation closed, yet an attentive observer might have noticed that his fingers trembled as he held them on the bell, during a moment's deliberation.

Mr. Cantilupe for *once* was mastered by an impulse — an impulse which by now was

matured into deliberate purpose. From the moment Diana's letter had been placed in his hand he had touched a new and mysterious force. He was keenly conscious of the fact, for all his sensibilities were matters of careful study with him. That such a force does exist, and works the tragic joys and sorrows of life, he was well aware ; but that such a force should play upon him had been a matter of no small astonishment to himself. In Diana's letter he had beheld an intellectual mate ; in Diana herself he beheld something yet more mystically enchanting.

“It is difficult to believe you are a Northerner,” he said abruptly. “You have all the Southern love of colour—it is declared in your power of expression ; and you have all the unconsciousness of ‘self’ which is native to the Italians.”

“Italy mothered me,” said Diana ; “and I am

as much her child as if a closer tie bound me to her."

This time, in answer to the bell, the automaton was succeeded by a dwarf carrying a Sèvres china tray, with a tea-service *en suite*. The dwarf placed the tray on a table—a thing all cupids and roses—and retired as noiselessly as he had entered.

"I hope my domestic arrangements have created no alarm, Miss Beauchamp." Mr. Cantilupe, pouring out tea and handling a cream jug, seemed more saturated with panther grace than ever. Most men holding a tea-pot look incongruous: he did not. "An *enfant terrible* once asked Diego, 'Are you a child? because if you are a child why don't you grow?' Diego repeated the jest to me, and laughed. He, like Socrates, fathers many a jest at his ugliness. 'What matter,' says Diego, 'how high or how low I be since I

must crumble into dust ; and if crooked things are to be made straight hereafter, what matter down here, where all is dust—one huge dust-bin ?’ Diego is a philosophical fellow, but the Ethiopian more so, because he never opens his lips.”

“ I like strange things,” said Diana.

“ And strange people ? ” said Mr. Cantilupe.

“ People are to me like moving figures,” said Diana, “ interesting in perspective, interesting in their surroundings and draperies. I have had no intimacies ; I only know people in the abstract.”

“ I thought so,” said Mr. Cantilupe.

“ In Italy life passes like a pageant,” continued Diana ; “ the dress of the people turns them one and all into pictures—’tis a humanising dress. Then the intense blue of the sky, the perpetual melody of the splash of water, the scent of flowers, the world of Art,

all turns life into a beautiful dream. Sorrow is there, doubtless, but sorrow with poetry on its eyelids; not the gaunt sorrow that meets you at every turn here in London. I wish all our beggars could be Italianised."

Mr. Cantilupe made no answer, but went to the cabinet with the history, and drew out several water-colour sketches by a well-known artist.

"Is this your Rome?" he said.

Diana's face filled with light. Rome shrouded in mist; Rome with Artemis veiling her face from its paganisms.

"He has painted more than he saw," said Mr. Cantilupe. "He was an artist indeed; and yet it was not till a great modern writer—perhaps the greatest we have for rhythmic melody of words—turned himself into a street crier, shouting his friend's perfections into a dull and unappreciative ear, called the 'public

ear,' that he was at last enshrined as a genius."

"What of this? 'Tis by another artist, perhaps as great; but he has no trumpeter, so the walls of Jericho have not fallen down before him. Do you recognise Venice sleeping in the noon-day heat? This fellow can paint the air. You can absolutely see Hermes at play."

"Venice, the home of the seven-robed daughters of light!" said Diana delightedly. "Next to being there, to see her touched by the brush of a *maestro* is best. Italy leaves for ever a moonlight in the soul."

"I wonder if Cook's tourists are endowed with moonlit minds!" said Mr. Cantilupe, looking at Diana with a shadowy smile. "Cook's tourists must come to the recitations; but we will begin with the exotics."

Then Mr. Cantilupe took out a pocket-

book, made a memo, and handed it to Miss Beauchamp. He had written his terms thereon. Would they be hers?

Diana looked, and crimsoned. The sun seemed huge; at that rate in a few years (and what are years?) she could redeem the Court, and then sit down and weep for her lost aim.

"You are too generous," she stammered. Mr. Cantilupe smiled; but *not* as he had smiled at Lord B——.

CHAPTER XI.

HE HAS AN UNDULATING MOVEMENT.

“Events come upon us like evil enchantments, and thoughts, feelings, apparitions in the darkness, are events; are they not?”

AFTER Easter Diana was to appear at the Cosmos Hall. Mr. Cantilupe had described the dimensions of the hall and the elegance of the arrangements. “It is a new building,” he had said, “and perfectly appointed—statuary, drapery, flowers, and many other charming details, combine to make it a success. The framework is there—you will give it a soul.”

“I should have felt terribly cast down had

you told me St. James's Hall was to be the scene of my *début*," Diana had said as she bade Mr. Cantilupe *Adieu* at the station, for he had called, and accompanied the ladies to the train; in fact, he had inaugurated himself the custodian of The Diana.

"I don't like that man," said Mrs. Battle, as the train moved off; "he frightens me."

"What *do* you mean?" said Diana; "he is charming. I feel my feet with him."

"He reminds me of the serpents in the Zoo," said Mrs. Battle; "he has an undulating movement."

"And a 'forked tongue,' you will hazard next," said Diana; "I defy you to say he has a serpent's eye—glittering, restless, small!"

"No," said Mrs. Battle, "but he is a man who would wind about your life, and suffocate you."

"My dear Mrs. Battle, don't develop,

please don't. Your conceptions are abnormal, preposterous ; relapse, I beseech you, into your homespun."

"He affects me with a peculiar sensation. He is unlike anybody I have seen before," continued Mrs. Battle.

"Of course he is. Suppose you lived on nothing but ham and eggs, or porridge and barley-meal, and suddenly an extraordinary dish was placed before you—the last thing evolved by a *chef* such as Brillat Savarin employed. If you were a *bon vivant* your eyes would sparkle, and goodness knows what convulsions of joy would shake you ; but if you happened to be a person who had no imagination beyond ham and eggs, porridge and barley-meal, you would turn away from that distinguished dish with no phantasm of appetite. Let us spiritualise our dishes. Mr. Bovin is ham and eggs, and Mr. Cantilupe—the

last thing evolved for a *gourmet*. These two men, bracketed together, make a comedy in themselves."

"Mr. Bovin is a *very* clever man," said Mrs. Battle; "he is a laborious man; he has won his establishment brick by brick—yes, brick by brick he bought the 'Limes,' and step by step he wooed his wife—*my* friend, Mrs. Bovin. Doctor Edwards is also a clever man. He has studied physic till he knows exactly from one glance the state of our frames. In the society of these two gentlemen I feel perfectly at ease."

"You are not afraid of the 'hiss' beneath the leaves," said Diana. "Doubtless the Bovins and Edwardses of creation are estimable, worthy people; they are turned out by the gross, and are a credit to their generation; but it is this 'legally speaking,' and 'professionally speaking,' and 'in my own line speaking,'

that makes the mass of people so profoundly uninteresting. Why can't a man be various and branch out in all directions, and be a many-limbed hydra, or an ever-enlarging mansion which adds turret to turret for its ever-increasing intelligences every year. The old order changeth ever; the 'adjective' of to-day is the 'noun' of to-morrow."

Mrs. Battle was listening, and endeavouring to follow Diana's flights, much as a bandy-legged pup tries to keep pace with a fox-terrier who is on the scent.

"Imagine," continued Diana, "how fatiguing to strike one note on an instrument all your life long; you may produce the tone soft or hard, but 'tis still the same note. Life is made up of these one-note people. The professor of Sanscrit is all Sanscrit; the mamma and her baby is all baby. We have a succession of drawers in our mental cells. Let us fill

them. Mr. Cantilupe's cupboards are uncommonly well filled."

"Cupboards! what cupboards?" said Mrs. Battle, pausing in the midst of a consumption of sponge-cake she had produced from her travelling-bag—of course she carried supplies for journeying loss;—"Miss Beauchamp, it is like a game of battledore and shuttlecock, talking to you."

"Hit out, my homespun. Hit out right and left, you will catch something by-and-by—if not the shuttlecock, then its shadow. I remember once hearing a very clever young Professor lecture to a crowd of us admiring ladies, on some subject which was supposedly beyond our reach, though we were there for the express purpose of hearing what he had to say on this particular question. Sometimes, as he paced up and down the platform, he seemed withdrawn from our gaze

altogether, as some new abstraction flitted ghost-like before him. We sat all eyes, and pricked ears—listening ears—don't they look precocious? Sometimes I've sat and looked at an assemblage of ears, divorcing them entirely from the other members, and an extraordinary effect is produced. The Professor threw out an obscure hint, then a full-blown theory, and we scrambled. 'Catch what you can,' said he, complacently, 'follow as best you are able.' The brightest intelligence amongst us dulled beneath such labelled incompetency; we, one and all, soon lost our 'proud carrying.'"

"Miss Edwards, the Doctor's sister, is most anxious to see you," said Mrs. Battle, shutting up her bag for half an hour. "She is the most scholarly lady in Leominster; ask her what you may, she knows all about it; she studies a big book, called *Beeton's Universal*, or some such name; I believe she knows every

word of it by heart ; and she knows everybody by name and reputation ; and she knows all the ships that have been wrecked, and the captains of them ; and all the steamers that sail round the world, and the time of their sailing ; and all the banks that have broken, and the mines that have blown up, and the companies which have sunk. I think you would like her very much, she is so well informed. It's astonishing—her information, and yet she has only lived at Leominster."

"Just as well," said Diana gravely. "She would have been even more *effrayante* than she is, if she had added on travelling experiences. It is fortunate she has lived between the covers of *Beeton's Universal*. What dreadful knowledge !"

"Still, you will see her when she calls," said Mrs. Battle anxiously. "She is a very useful person."

“I see everybody who wants to see me,” said Diana.

“You are so like Sir Golf in some ways,” said Mrs. Battle; “he was so approachable. Very different to your father, I believe.”

Diana’s face clouded.

“Papa was too ‘exquisite’—poverty is at daggers-drawn with the ‘exquisite.’ To possess, whether you will or not, the ‘grand air,’ and then to have but few coins in your pocket—is it not provoking? Does it not make the world scowl on man or woman? Of mamma I have but a dim recollection. I remember her bidding me good-bye at school in Rome. I was a small child—this was the last time I saw her. She was the practical part of papa, I believe. He became very reckless after her loss; but of course you have heard all these details from Sir Golf, though he showed so little interest in us, I can scarce-

ly believe he mentioned the filling in of events."

Mrs. Battle shook her head, as she drew another sponge-cake from her bag.

"Salmon took the mastery of Sir Golf," she said, munching.

"Roman fever, the scourge of the country," continued Diana—"which never attacked me, perhaps because in Italy I breathe my native air—took its remorseless hold on papa, and I was left alone; but for 'the Philothea,' I know not what would have become of me. I had walked to the *Campagna*; it was a long way, and I was tired. Yet I was happy, for I could feel alone with the earth and sky, and sometimes, notwithstanding all its beauty, the very majesty of Imperial Rome, with all its ruined bygone greatness, falls like a sad-coloured mantle on your spirit. You can appreciate my meaning in some degree, if you think of picnicing in

Westminster Abbey. Rome is one huge extended magnificence of colossal grandeur and ruined might. Rome seems to cry through all her streets, 'See what man can do! See from whence he has fallen!' I think had Darwin *lived* in Rome instead of Kent, he would hardly have worked out his theory of the monkeys. Here is colour and melody and beauty, and its Nemesis, ruin, tracking it everywhere. So I had gone to the *Campagna*. I had the long walk back before me. The road was dusty; but, as I said before, I was happy. A carriage drove slowly past me. A lady was thrown back in it; perhaps, for all my inward content, I looked forlorn. The eyes of this lady alighted on me meditatively. She desired the driver to stop.

“‘You are tired,’ she said gracefully. ‘This is such a dusty road. You are returning to Rome. *Do* let me drive you there. I am so *dull*.’

“Thus graciously accosted, I did not refuse. The result of this drive you know—recitations all over Italy, followed by my summons here. Mr. Cantilupe says recitations are peculiarly adapted to the mood of people just now.”

“I wish you would not place your affairs in Mr. Cantilupe’s hands,” said Mrs. Battle. “He *is* so like the serpent I saw at the Zoo yesterday. So dreadfully like—dear, dear.”

“You have localized the serpent,” said Diana; “he was ranked plural just now. Still, Mr. Cantilupe is decidedly ‘singular’; you are right there.”

CHAPTER XII.

FLYING A KITE.

“ Smile like the knot of cowslips on the cliff not to be come at by the willing hand.”

“ One comfort is, that great men taken up in any way are profitable company.”

SIR BLAISE had lived the life of a hermit—making due allowance for an *entourage* which left nothing to be desired—for three months. He had not, it is true, looked out on four bare walls, told his beads, lain prostrate on a damp floor, resorted to rigorous penance, abstained from meats; those outward signs of an inward struggle had not been his. None the less he had looked inwards for the first time at his

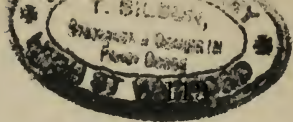
spiritual structure (for, pass by the *fact* as we may, each one of us holds within us two worlds, the one terrestrial, the other celestial; we are linked, indissolubly linked, with the latter, temporarily with the former; yet to behold us, one would think surely the reverse must be the case); and had seen a strange procession sweep up and down within those four walls. Sir Blaise could hardly lay the pleasing unction to his soul which is the peculiar quackery the poor man plasters *his* soul withal—"I never does no harm to nobody, and I does what I can."

No, no; there were a great many flies in the apothecary's ointment. When death had gripped him, those "flies," how they tormented him! All the same, he was floundering about in hopeless confusion—a confusion as helpless as befalls an amateur when flung into the ocean by an expert.

Books of theology presented themselves before him, and he read them ; hard facts, uncompromising truths, hammer and nail, screw and pickaxe.

Sir Blaise sat in the library at Whitefriars with the pale winter sunbeams chasing each other over the open pages, as if to caress his quest, and to promise light. When a man thus sits down deliberately to find out his God, and to face the mystery of his being, how godlike he seems !

Meantime the county commenced to be seriously curious about Sir Blaise. Was he going to retire for ever from all society ? He had thrown up the mastership of the hounds, —the first step in that direction. Sir Blaise give up hunting ! He whose “Tally-ho” was like the glorious cry of some Nimrod, was he going to turn Whitefriars into a monastery ? Was he going to follow in the footsteps of



Father Ignatius? Pity was, Whitefriars had been restored; it would have carried out past traditions far better in its ancient guise. Was Father Ignatius at the bottom of it? Sir Blaise had been at Brighton not long ago, and the Father was there at the same time. By-the-bye, what had taken Sir Blaise to Brighton? These invulnerables always caught it in the end, and that pretty severely; it must be "love."

Yes, it was love. They were quite sure it was love; when a man turns recluse, be sure love is at the bottom of it. Nothing else will drive him to such extremes. Money loss will sour a man up, and he will perhaps fly the country, or go about with a dog-leaved lip, and throw *couleur de jaune* on everything, but he won't shut himself up. No, 'tis love makes people cry, "Muffles! Muffles! Tie up the knocker. Say I am

sick ; nay, further, dead." 'Tis love consorts with ashes and embosoms solitude—love which glowers and maddens and wreathes and twists. Yes, yes !

Miss Edwards, the Doctor's sister, had perhaps heard all about it—the county must really ask her to luncheon. So Miss Edwards received an invasion of notes, and looked unutterables, and read up *Beeton's Universal*, and plastered her hair in straight lines on either side till the parting widened terribly, and wore “kids” at bedtime to get her hands as white as Lady Masters's, and went forth scrub and brush and cram to her luncheons.

That she had *no* information was her *own* information ; she was to be feasted, and she must bring a “dole” for that feasting. That her brother was reticent—madly reticent—was not her fault ; that he never gave her the smallest iota of information concerning his patients was

the fault of that mad reticence. Oh that he were like dear old Doctor Gosling, the allopathic and general practitioner, who was brimming over with details and *on dits* about other people's patients, to say nothing of illustrated volumes concerning his own.

The Doctor—for it was thus Miss Edwards named her brother, even in thought—was buttoned up in silence. If he would but take her advice, and study *Beeton*, he would be able to hold his own and show up as she. Where would she be without the *Universal*? Beneath the heel of everybody. As it was, she could fetch and carry for picked intellects, for even *these* get hazy now and then over dates and birth-places, and so on. Miss Edwards went the round of her luncheons, and flew a kite, and then recovered it to fly it a yard or two farther. She rather enjoyed this kite-flying, for the eyes of the county were

looking on, the weather all that could be desired, and the kite, *enfin* flying up in a gale of hurry to descend in a dead calm.

“Stupid old thing!” said Francisca (for it was especially at the Masters’s she had displayed her powers); “the ‘*stupidest*’ old thing that ever came cackling into creation. She knows nothing at all about the matter. Doctor Edwards is not likely to give his patients’ secrets up for her to arrange them into mother tinctures, and distil them in globules and pilules.”

“Of course,” said Lady Masters meditatively, “Doctor Edwards carries the key to this extraordinary seclusion on the part of Sir Blaise. Medical men become a species of Father Confessor.”

“Medical pets,” said Francisca; “from one pulse to another—that is the way with most young ladies—myself excluded. But very

lively people, such as myself, seldom have a pulse."

Cecilia looked down. Francisca was so terribly straight; but then Mr. Languedoc had never sat at *her* feet, with eyes full of dreams, repeating *Mariana in the South*. Would Francisca have come through such a moment as that, and still find herself without a pulse? Was it not enough to give anybody a wild pulse? Cecilia was smiling pensively, and Lady Masters, glancing at her, had a vision of Mr. Languedoc's pale eyes, long hair, and slight form—through which Cecilia declared the moon looked. She drew up her figure bracingly, and said—

"Cecilia, what of your *tonic-sol-fa*? Persistent practice is the only method of cultivating the *vox humana*."

"What peculiar noises we do make through the medium of our *vox humanas*!" said

Francisca. "Neighing and braying, and bahing and crowing, each of us carries our duplicate animal somewhere. My last idea is to make a collection of the afflictive human noises I have heard. I shall call it the most original *onic-sol-fa* on record. It will include Mr. Baldock's 'bray,' and Mrs. Vesey's 'wee-wee,' Count Gleiker's 'surprise snort,' and Professor Tweedie's scientific 'snuffles.' I shall label them neatly, and write beneath—'Contributions gladly received.'"

"My dear Francisca, how will you cage the sounds?" said Lady Masters laughing.

"How does Edison cage everything? I intend to rival Edison. Are you quite sure there is no commercial blood in our veins, no intervening streamlets to break the flow and take the prose out of us? Where does Cecilia get her hereditary *nocturnes* in blue and silver? Where does Miss Beauchamp get her

dramatic power and Bohemian ways? Where has Sir Blaise found an interpreter to solitude? And, lastly—where, oh! where, has Miss Edwards derived her knowledge of all things?"

CHAPTER XIII.

THREE PHILOSOPHERS.

"Body cannot teach wisdom, God only."

*"He who loves goodness harbours angels, reveres reverence,
and lives with God."*

"I WONDER what became of De Quincey?" thought Sir Blaise. A college friend of by-gone years had started into life at memory's touch. What an extraordinary amount of *bric-a-brac* our memories hold! And yet not one bit of that old assemblage of value and rubbish but has its special importance, nay, its priceless worth. Every separate atom will make a perfect whole some day, and when, hereafter, we see this collection of events,

which we call "life," presented before us with each piece fitting into the puzzle, we shall say, "the threads were indeed deftly spun, the results were indeed systematically gathered."

Sir Blaise was thrown back in an arm-chair in the library. He had been so sitting for two hours. Three "Skyes," each one as long and low as the other, were lying on the hearth-rug at his feet—perfect of their kind, for Sir Blaise instinctively gathered perfection to himself. His knowledge of cattle (allow the word to embrace dogs) was hereditary. What *are* we to do with these hereditary virtues and failings? Make the most of them in the one instance, and conquer them in the other, says Worldly Wisdom, smiling and purring with happy ease of facial muscles.

But suppose you have inherited a traditional past, wherein the exotics of a cultivated understanding bloomed happily in the midst of

stately surroundings ; and suppose the rolling centuries had carried root and flower away, leaving nothing but the exquisite fragrance which has floated down the ages to haunt you like a dream ; suppose yourself also to take birth in Cremation Villa, and to be snuffing up commonplace odours and feeding on the medium intelligences of beef-eaters and the “sample” type of cult ; and throughout your nature, and for ever stealthily wafted towards you, is the subtle fragrance of that inherited memory making you like a mute note or a discordant string amidst your surroundings ;— what a succession of *mauvais quarts d’heure* your life must be as you move awkwardly in your ill-fitting garments, unless you have lost yourself in the transcendental glories of the future—which is the common heritage of all who will to possess it—and let a rarer, sweeter fragrance from the garden of our restored Eden

overpower that baleful inheritance which made you like a sparrow on the house-top of Cremation Villa. Hereditary knowledge as to the perfections of cattle, and cattle had descended to Sir Blaise ; so if you wanted to see either horse or dog or heifer without a flaw, you had best pay a visit to Whitefriars.

The three Skyes were of one mind on one point—passionate attachment to Sir Blaise. There is something inexpressibly charming in a dog's love. It has elements of exceeding beauty. To be loved with a dog-like attachment, for staying powers, and indifference to cold or warmth, time or place or circumstance, you will not find easily surpassed. Every human love would do well to have some of these rudimentary instincts linked to its higher capacities.

The Skye breed have the virtues of their race very markedly developed. First,

faithfulness—absolute and entire—*you* only till death and after death ; then patient watchfulness—*your* step, through the patient hours waiting for *you*—your very expression is scanned. If you are in trouble, your dog knows it—and his mute sympathy is yours. If you are gay—your dog shares in it—his delighted wags and glad barks are *yours* ; he is *one* with you, whatever your mood. Surely God gave us dogs for a peculiar form of companionship. How dull our walks would be without them ; how lonely our homes ! A home without animals is imperfect. Fidgety people, with their notions of “mess,” how we pity them their loss, and rejoice in our gain. That dear old hidden bone is the *expression* of a faithful presence that we would not be without for the most orderly “just so” arrangements.

“Bury me with my dogs about me,” said

Frederick the Great, "for they are my true friends."

Three long heads lay on the hearthrug in unbroken line, and three pairs of eyes were meditatively gazing into the fire.

"I wonder what became of De Quincey?" Sir Blaise's voice broke the stillness.

Diogenes, the eldest of the three, immediately rose, and, after stretching his long lithe body, sat staring at his master with an unexampled expression of knowledge, derived from vast and cultivated reflections. There is in this peculiar breed of Skye a very depth of meaning in their eyes. The "Tubbed Philosopher" at the National Gallery has just such an expression, and it is in no way exaggerated.

Socrates followed on, and helped himself to a stretch by placing two paws on Sir Blaise's knee; while Plato sneezed, and threw out a platonic in illustrative fashion, by dashing at

Dio's tail. Plato was the youngest of the three, and the most flighty, having many a time to be held between Dio's paws and shown the philosopher's teeth, as he growled out his contempt for the platonics which don't exist except in theory, as life is too real for such cloaked sentiments.

"Down," said Sir Blaise; and down sunk the philosophers into dreams and speculations once more.

"I recall him perfectly well now," mused Sir Blaise. "We heathens used to get away from him; he made us feel swinish. I remember once going to his rooms at Balliol, and thinking in what a mediæval style he had done them up. He never gave 'wines' or joined in any larks, and his nickname, St. Gussy, seemed to fit him like a monk's cowl; yet there was nothing effeminate about him. What biceps he had! I remember asking him, 'Why don't

you go in for the Blue? you ought to throw those biceps of yours into the national service'; and his reply—'I have another race on hand, none the less real for being supernatural. I've to hit out against a common foe, a wily fellow, who has a thousand masks and a million garbs. I'm alive to a *fact* at last, thank God! Lucifer has fallen from Heaven, and his chosen seat is Earth. This race beats all Earth's races hollow—it takes all a fellow's time and energies.'

"But I remember expostulating with him, 'There are so many opinions on this subject. What are all these scientific fellows telling us?'

"'What, indeed?' said he, with a short laugh. 'The origin of many things, but *not* the origin of sin. They may boil down everything, but they *can't* boil down that. They had best go back to Eden, and, in a rever-

berating "hiss," which has circled down the ages, look into this matter, for it's vastly more important than the formation of strata.'

"Years have passed since then. I wonder if a letter to the University Club would find him. Well, I can but try."

Rising hurriedly, Sir Blaise wrote a few lines to Keith de Quincey, and then, with more alacrity than he had shown for months, ordered his horse, and, for the first time since his accident, went for a ride.

CHAPTER XIV.

'TIS A VANDYKE.

“Through the years and the centuries, through evil ages, through toys and atoms, a great and beneficent tendency irresistibly streams.”

“He that can discern the loveliness of things, we call him Poet, Painter, Man of Genius, gifted, lovable.”

EASTER had come, and brought with it such a flight of golden days that but for almanacks and vegetation you might have closed your eyes, and, as the soft air played about you, cried, “It is summer—it is summer !”

Beauchamp Court looked like some old enchanted spot which had fallen asleep under a spell. The gardeners had forgotten all about

hoes and rakes; and so Nature was having a lawless time, running wild with careless exuberance—that was all.

The rabbits, too, had such games, from morning till night; they began to know all about Diana, and scarcely took the trouble to get them to their holes, when they heard the sound of her footsteps. She was their friend. One venerable bunny had told them so. *She* had been guilty of leaving her young, one day, at the sound of Diana's moving drapery, and scampering as fast as her hoppers would carry her down a glade hard by. But once hidden in the long grass, she had peeped out, and seen Diana go to her burrow, and put in her hand, and bring out first one little soft ball, and then another and another, and lay them against her cheek and kiss them, and then gently replace them.

Madame Bunny spread the news far and

wide, so there was joy among the multitude of rabbits.

Diana was never weary of rambling about the grounds. Beauchamp was already very dear to her, and its redemption her absorbing aim.

“Every tree of you shall be out of the mortgagee’s hands. I’ll have the right to turn tree-hewer, like the Premier, if I will. Not that one of your glorious frames shall be touched ; live on you shall, and gather about you the birds, with their loves and their nests and their songs, till Time destroys or lightning blasts.”

She was standing beneath a chestnut which was already in bloom, for Easter fell late.

As these thoughts were flitting through her, the avenue, with its grand sentinels, faced her ; and a book was in her hand. She was studying “Rizpah” in every detail of its light

and shade ; also a selection from the American poets, which she had decided upon reciting at her first appearance.

Her eyes were bent upon the open page now in utter absorption, so she neither saw nor heard the approach of Mr. Cantilupe (for it was he coming, with the undulating movement so obnoxious to Mrs. Battle) towards her, closely followed by Diego.

“ Miss Beauchamp ! ”

Diana started ; his voice was at her ear.

“ Mr. Cantilupe ! ”

“ Yes, Mr. Cantilupe. I have caught you, as I expected to catch you, engrossed with your art. Study, study, 'tis the only way to win renown, though artistic germs must of course be there to cultivate in the first instance. I am here, because I have much to say to you about Cosmos Hall. The time is drawing very near.”

“How good of you to come all this distance,” said Diana. She had been so entirely alone for the last few weeks that the sound of a fresh voice had seemed strange to her at first—much as a recluse feels an alien when suddenly hurled into a crowd.

“Nothing good about it,” said Mr. Cantilupe, extending his taper fingers, and waving all goodness out of his way.

“You have not walked from Leominster,” said Diana suddenly, aghast.

Mr. Cantilupe again waved his hand as if shunting all inquiries.

“Your servant will be tired,” continued Diana.

Mr. Cantilupe stroked his moustache, and said, “Diego and I are of one mind—we know nothing of that malady called fatigue.”

“You must stay now you are here,” said Diana. “I have a big establishment, as you

may perceive." There was a mocking smile about Diana's lips.

"Yes, I perceive," said Mr. Cantilupe. "We will partake of your hospitality till nightfall, when Diego and I will retrace our steps to Leominster. I have engaged rooms at the 'Green Man' till to-morrow. The most out-of-the-way inn or hotel I could find. I am addicted to out-of-the-way spots.

"You have a charming place, Miss Beauchamp; it only needs a 'kiss' to wake it all up. The cook would begin to bake the bread, the scullery-maid to peel the potatoes, the—ah——."

Mr. Cantilupe was very fond of breaking off in the middle of his sentences—these peculiarities lent themselves to his *rôle*; did he think he would be the Prince?

There was a bright wood fire in the hall, and before it lay Diana's two *vauriens*—Leone

and Muscatel; it would be kindest to call them foreigners, or varieties, for into their pedigrees only the very foolish would dive.

At the sight of Mr. Cantilupe they rose simultaneously, and snarled long and low, gathering about Mr. Cantilupe's legs, and muttering dislike at the visitor.

Mrs. Battle, who was peeping from the dining-room door, murmured, "Sensible brutes! they see what I see. Miss Beauchamp, for all her talent, is so 'headlong.'"

"Your canine friends are not so hospitable as their mistress," said Mr. Cantilupe, as he glided after Diana to the drawing-room.

"They have the manners of their class, I suppose," said Diana. "They are not sufficiently well-bred to smile and hate at the same moment—that is a matter of *culte*; nevertheless, Leone and Muscatel are of priceless worth to me. We made friends in an

itinerant fashion in Tuscany. I found them homeless and hungry, they found me friendless and hungry in another fashion ; so a bond of close sympathy was struck."

"Miss Beauchamp need never be friendless," said Mr. Cantilupe, assuming his favourite position at the mantelpiece.

"My acquaintances are numerous — my friends none," said Diana. "Friends too often, like a gulf-stream, suck you under when they have drained the sources of your past, present, and future."

"When thought flashes on thought, and subtle sympathies are exchanged, gulf-streams are forgotten. Miss Beauchamp, you must learn to value friendship."

"In theory," said Diana lightly.

"In practice," said Mr. Cantilupe, looking at her with peculiar intentness.

Once more, as at their first interview, a

profound silence fell, and Diana could not break it while Mr. Cantilupe's extraordinary eyes held her. Had he studied mesmerism? What had he not studied?

Mr. Cantilupe allowed the silence just as long as he desired, and then commenced a running commentary on the manner in which the drawing-room was arranged.

"Admirable taste! The past and present meet without clashing, and none but an *artiste* could fuse such opposing forces."

Suddenly his comments ceased, and he strolled towards the corner where Diana had enshrined her treasured picture from the lumber-room. He remained fully ten minutes silently regarding it, Diana as silently regarding him, thinking how he worships Art, and appreciates genius.

"It strikes him mute just as it did me!"

But when ten minutes had elapsed, Diana

spoke. "You admire my treasure ; I discovered it in the lumber-room. I have seen just such treasures in Italy. Sometimes I think this is a masterpiece ; if so, Mr. Cantilupe, I need hardly carry out my recitations. What is £50,000 to an Art collector ?"

"Is this modest sum your goal ?" said Mr. Cantilupe negligently.

"Yes," said Diana, interlacing her fingers.

"May I remove this picture from the wall ?" said he, after another prolonged examination.

"Do ; perhaps you can find out the master."

Mr. Cantilupe had his back to Diana during a careful survey of marks and signs by which an original may be discovered. As he replaced it he said, "'Tis a Vandyke. Miss Beauchamp, you are fortunate ; you were born under a lucky planet."

"You say it is a Vandyke," Diana said slowly.

“Have I heard you aright, or am I dreaming? This can't be true.”

“It is quite true,” said Mr. Cantilupe, as he arranged the picture in a more correct line—“it is quite true. I have never been mistaken in discerning an old master.”

Then Mr. Cantilupe strolled to the divan on which Diana was sitting, and, bending down, said, “What will you do with your new possession? Will you keep it, or will you part with it? Remember, 'tis a Vandyke—*only* a Vandyke.” He paused and smiled, then said:—“I have a friend (or shall I say acquaintance? for, like you, I, too, disdain friends); he is wealthy—a Russian nabob. Just now he has a mania for the old masters; to-morrow, it may be, for French poodles. If you like he shall buy your Vandyke, and he shall give £30,000 for it—it is *nothing* to him. He ranks but little lower than the

Imperial House; he has estates in every capital of Europe. Shall he buy your Vandyke? Miss Beauchamp has but to command. I will see him to-morrow. His manias always last exactly two months. I keep a careful account of dates in my pocket-book. This mania has one week more to run; if I were to suggest the purchase of an old master after that period, he would say—‘*Pouf!* I can’t think, my dear Cantilupe, whatever induced me to buy those ridiculous old pictures. I declare I am surprised at my bad taste. Why, one Whistler is worth the whole lot of them strung together. No, no—I’ve done with such nonsense. I’m about to make a collection of wigs. Get me one of the Lord Chancellor’s. I’ll give £30,000 for it. And discover one of old Ben Jonson’s. I’m turning *sage et raisonnable*. No more old masters for me.’ We are just in time. Did

I not say, Miss Beauchamp, you were born under a lucky planet? Will you part with your Vandyke?"

What restrained Diana from grasping Mr. Cantilupe's taper fingers, much as she had Mr. Bovin's dumplings, she never knew.

"Will I?" she said, as she rose from the divan. "Will I? Why are you so kind to me? After *this*, surely I must believe in friendship."

Looking down on the carpet, Mr. Cantilupe said, "What of Cosmos Hall? Will the arrangements still stand? But I think you said £50,000 is your goal."

"I must earn the rest," said Diana, pacing the room. "£20,000 is a mere trifle now—a trifle at least when one feels inspired, and I *do*;" and she looked so.

Mr. Cantilupe retired to the mantelpiece again, and remained, head on hand, buried in thought, till the dinner bell awoke him.

CHAPTER XV.

TOWNSFOLK.

“A man’s reach should exceed his grasp ; or what’s a Heaven for ?”

Mrs. BOVIN had been withheld from calling on Miss Beauchamp by indisposition, but she was now quite well again, and to be quite well, with her, meant bubble and squeak from morning till night.

Mrs. Bovin’s acquaintance with syntax was small, she bowed awkwardly to nouns and adjectives, and they in their turn treated her very maliciously, courtesying in every sentence in the wrong place, with mock court ; but Mrs. Bovin thought the bows and courtesies were

quite the correct thing, and no voice was louder or more authoritative in Leominster circles than hers.

She had looked in on Miss Edwards the day before her intended visit to the Court, and told her of her intention, if the weather "got up" fine, of taking a fly, and driving to Beauchamp; and she also asked Miss Edwards to accompany her. Miss Edwards expressed much pleasure.

"Legally speaking, *you* have a right to call; and professionally speaking, *I* have," said she, glancing at the bird of paradise on Mrs. Bovin's bonnet.

"Miss Beauchamp is herself a professional," said Mrs. Bovin, who now and then emerged out of the regions of twilight. "What are recitations?"

"The *recitative* style is a kind of tuneful pronunciation more musical than common speech,

and less so than song or chant," said Miss Edwards.

"It's the last thing 'got up,'" said Mrs. Bovin, who was full of positive intelligence. "I hear our new Duchess—the Duchess of Alton—is great at recitation. With regard to Miss Beauchamp, poor thing, I'm very sorry for her. The property is heavily mortgaged."

"Poor thing!" echoed Miss Edwards, "it's very sad. To-morrow, then, at two o'clock; it's an hour's drive, and I should like to find her in."

"Yes, poor thing, so should I," said Mrs. Bovin; "but anyhow we shall see dear Mrs. Battle."

So at two o'clock, the following day, the ladies started, and there was no cessation of "talk" during the drive; if people were silent for half a minute, Mrs. Bovin always gave a long crow, ending with—

“What a silence has got up!” (then a funny little bob forward); “quite a Quakers’ meeting.” Then crow two.

She was alive in the flesh, that was all that could be said of her; as for listening to angels’ footfalls, which can only be heard in the soul’s silence, Mrs. Bovin had no phantasm of such mystic surrounding, or that she lacked cultivation, or that there are awful depths, as there are awful heights, which call for stillness, that their strange teachings may be so much as guessed at. She had a voice, and she must use it; a laugh with a clang like a gong, and it must be heard; and she was, beyond all, a “dear soul,” according to Mr. Bovin, who liked plenty of light and plenty of noise at the “Limes,” in contradistinction to the fog of law and the scratch of quills at the office.

In the shadowy drawing-room at Beau-

champ, with its quaint furniture and peculiar draperies, for one brief second Mrs. Bovin was quiet.

“It appears very gloomy,” she said in a loud whisper at last. “I should like to drag all these blinds up and let the light get in. What a contrast to the ‘Limes’!”

“I have observed, in certain circles, subdued light is much affected. The other day, when I was lunching at the Masters’, I noticed the rose-coloured blinds there three-parts down,” said Miss Edwards.

“What were you doing at the Masters’?” said Mrs. Bovin.

“The usual thing,” said Miss Edwards.

“The *unusual* thing, you mean,” said Mrs. Bovin, crowing loud. She was still crowing when Diana, entering from a side-door, stood before them.

The charm of Diana’s manner consisted in

unconscious grace. She always seemed unaffectedly pleased to see you, and immediately to draw forth all that was most comely in your nature. She never approached the private entrances of your inmost being, but moved gently up and down the high roads and broad ways, scattering a flower here and there. She was so perfectly *posée*, that however clumsy you might be, you instinctively gathered something of her *trainante* charm; and so people came and went about her without any of those distressing ventures which make such patchwork of most female gatherings. She was perfectly well-bred; hence she had no curiosity. If you wanted help, Diana would have carried you, burden and all, on her lithe shoulders many a day; but she would have no "sanctuary" intercourse with you; three "moons" would always divide you from Diana.

Mrs. Bovin's pronouns and adjectives absolutely arranged themselves, and Miss Edwards let go *Beeton's Universal*.

"Mr. Bovin has been so anxious for me to call," said Mrs. Bovin. "Of course, you know who I am; and my friend is Miss Edwards, the Doctor's sister. But Mrs. Battle will have told you all about us."

"It's very good of you to come and see me," said Diana. "Since I left Italy I have been much alone, but as yet I have beheld no visions. You know what George Eliot says about living much alone."

(Miss Edwards never closed an eye all that night for thinking what George Eliot *had* said, and her lost opportunity of quoting it.)

"I talk aloud when I have no one to talk to," said Mrs. Bovin; "I daresay if anybody heard me, they would say I am deranged; but I can't bear a silence; never could; it's so dull.

Give me plenty of conversation, never mind the quality."

Diana smiled, and began to talk of the Italians and the velvety texture of the language, passing from the dialect to the country; and she painted her thoughts so prettily that her visitors sat listening and staring as if a succession of kaleidoscopic pictures were passing before them.

Mrs. Bovin found time to whisper to Mrs. Battle, who had finally joined their circle—

"Most taking, so free—and yet so very much the lady."

"She is rare," said Mrs. Battle; "but then all the Golfs were rare." Mrs. Battle was proud of this discovery; it was almost as clever as Mr. Cantilupe's discovery of a Vandyke.

Mrs. Battle found time also to whisper to Mrs. Bovin of *that* discovery, and so overpowered her that she quite forgot to put up

the windows of the fly on the return drive, and allowed the wind to play at toss-curly as much as it would, as she discoursed to Miss Edwards of this wonderful piece of intelligence, which would be a *pièce de résistance* in Leominster circles for the next two months—for the country pulse beats slowly, and country fingers fumble away with the tag-ends of startling communications, and twist those ends into very peculiar shapes for many a day, while London ones have disposed of cat's-cradle at a sitting.

* * * * *

“Did Mrs. Bovin know about the Vandyke?” said Diana that evening, looking up suddenly from her study of Shakspeare.

“No,” said Mrs. Battle, “she was quite taken aback.”

“Bowled over,” said Diana. “There is a young Mr. Bovin, is there not?”

“Yes, an only son, at present in France.”

“The game of cricket is complete—ball, bat, wicket. I have a vision, and I was only boasting this afternoon that I have had none since I have been here.”

“Cricket!” said Mrs. Bovin; “what cricket?”

“Never mind,” said Diana. “I told Mr. Bovin not to mention the subject of the Vandyke to Mrs. Bovin or anybody else till I gave him leave.”

“Husbands should have no secrets from their wives, Miss Beauchamp.”

“Only legally speaking,” said Diana. “We must draw the line somewhere.”

“Mr. Cantilupe would *never* give *his* secrets up to a lady’s keeping,” said Mrs. Battle. “I should think Diego, the dwarf, was in possession of a few, though. He frightens me almost more than his master.”

“You are malicious, Mrs. Battle, really malicious,” said Diana. “I have a peculiar fondness for all misshapen people. As for Diego, he is exceedingly clever; philosophizes over his own deformity, and even fathers a jest at it.”

“Very wicked to jest at his own appearance. In fact, Mr. Cantilupe and the dwarf are not like other matter-of-fact people; they are altogether out of the way, and make me feel dreadfully uncomfortable. If I were a Roman Catholic I should be always telling my beads when they are by. As it is, I really do say ‘Deliver us from evil’ each time I look at either of them.”

Mrs. Battle was so absolutely in earnest, that Diana grew earnest too.

“I am sure you are mistaken, Mrs. Battle. You have lived a very quiet life amongst the simple people of Leominster, and Mr. Cantilupe,

because he has a singular appearance, added to a peculiar form of intelligence, and a rare range of culture, strikes you as somebody out of the way. You will soon grow accustomed to him, and like him quite as well as, if not better than, Mr. Bovin or Doctor Edwards."

"It is because my life has been quiet that my judgment is calm," urged Mrs. Battle tremulously, but determinedly. "You seem to be in no way aware, Miss Beauchamp, of the extraordinary glances Mr. Cantilupe casts upon you. The purport of such glances I don't pretend to fathom; but I cannot help wondering of what he is thinking, or what plan regarding you he is forming."

"He is interested in me as an *artiste*," said Diana; "nothing more. He has laid a great debt on my shoulders, 'tis true, by the sale of this picture, but I cannot see why he should

be incapable of a generous act; he knows very rich people—in fact, he knows the *élite*.”

“But how, Miss Beauchamp? Who is Mr. Cantilupe?”

“Was there not a Herefordshire bishop of that name? and did not ye bells of Hereford fall a-ringing, when from ye ancient belfry they *saw*, or *felt*, according to bell fashion, the worthy bishop, after a lengthy absence, a-coming down ye road? Suppose I tell you that Mr. Cantilupe is related to the sometime Bishop of Hereford, will you be satisfied then? Will lawn sleeves set your mind at rest?”

“Mr. Cantilupe’s ancestors are in the Zoo; he belongs to the serpent brood; he is of the seed of the serpent,” said Mrs. Battle.

“Then he shares a common parentage,” said Diana.

Mrs. Battle persisted no longer; she was,

after all, but Miss Beauchamp's paid house-keeper, though in point of connection a more respectable——; but that was traditional. Mrs. Battle did not often proclaim how the mighty had fallen; though she was without imagination, yet she had a sound judgment; in fact, she was sound altogether.

CHAPTER XVI.

LEGALITY.

“Why think to shut up all things in your narrow coop, when we know there are not one or two only ; but ten, twenty, a thousand things, and unlike.”

MR. CANTILUPE had duly forwarded the big cheque to Miss Beauchamp ; whereupon there had been an interview with Mr. Bovin ; and this time his lips had been much compressed, “legally speaking,” during the whole of this important conversation.

A mortgaged property is, as a rule, like a Chancery suit ; and the fate of the little nigger who fell into those courts is in no way exagger-

ated. Mr. Bovin might well sit easily in the arm-chair and dream dreams when an impossible mortgage was under discussion. But *now*, things had indeed altered.

Thirty thousand pounds! Mr. Bovin longed to give way to a low whistle, which had doubtless descended to him in lieu of estates; but he must remember *where* he was, and *whom* he was addressing.

“Ladies are usually afraid of mines,” he hazarded, at the interview under review. “They had their fingers terribly burnt in the Emly explosion, not so very long ago; and once bitten, twice shy. But enormous sums were taken out of that mine before it was sold over. It was a case of exhaustion. I really think people are very foolish to relegate all mines to the land of failure because they don’t always turn out well.”

Mr. Bovin was feeling the temperature of

Miss Beauchamp's mind, and paused for a second.

"I shall pay off as much of the mortgage as I can," said Diana decidedly; "£20,000 will now free this estate."

"That's a lady's way of looking at the case," said Mr. Bovin; "but not a business-like scheme. You might double your £30,000 if you invest it in a capital affair I have now in hand."

"I might lose it altogether," said Diana.

"There is no chance of your losing the money; once the company is floated, you can withdraw your interest in the concern altogether, with a considerable balance to your account. I merely want your name."

"I don't understand," said Diana.

"No; of course you don't; how should you?" said Mr. Bovin. "We don't want ladies to understand business; they will lose all their

charm if they get keen-eyed and share-and-stock-taking-minded. What is more odious than a market-quoting woman? There are such monstrosities now-a-days. Sir Golf had unlimited confidence in my advice."

"I am sure he had," said Diana; "but I think it's so much nicer to be content with what one possesses, and not try to double it. I am so anxious to pay off the mortgage, and look upon this property as my very own."

Mr. Bovin drew some papers from his pocket, with unruffled brow; he did not expect to get his own way with Diana *tout de suite*. He had had many dealings with ladies before; in fact, the greater part of his clients were ladies; and the 'dear things' only required a little judicious management, and so on.

"We purpose working these coal mines," said he, drawing a map from his pocket. "Here

they are, situated in North Wales ; and in fact I have a specimen of the anthracite coal in my pocket."

He produced the specimen, which, however, Diana refused to finger.

"No smoke, no waste, and plenty of heat. We have a capital board of directors—all men of large wealth and influence."

"Mr. Bovin," said Diana firmly, "you will excuse me looking further into the matter. My mind on the subject is distinctly moulded, and no amount of pressure will alter it."

Mr. Bovin folded up the papers and dropped the specimen coal into a peculiarly shaped glass bottle. He was *very* angry, and he could not but show it. Miss Beauchamp was the first lady who had resisted his advice ; how odious were clever women, how unfeminine, how unpliant, how——But enough.

Diana sighed, she saw his wrath. Oh !

odious money—the root of all evil, and the source of all discomfort; equally the plague of those who possess it as the plague of those who want it.

Nothing in this world seems absolutely your own, for meddlesome fingers will turn over your ‘pieces,’ or your ‘joys,’ or your ‘sorrows’ even. Nothing is absolutely sacred directly it is known, and if, as a clever writer has *said*, this world is one vast whispering gallery, what is your own? The very waves will claim your past as they come and kiss the shore. Verily, Eve, when thou didst eat the golden apple, thou didst bring us into terrible straits; the mystic fruit with its perfect halves—good and evil—how equal the balance, and how equal our conceptions!

Mr. Bovin grew terribly red; the red mounted to his smooth bald head and streaked it with rosy clouds; he got on his legs, and they now

looked infuriated, for fury does not localize its expression to one feature.

“I think, Miss Beauchamp,” he said, “it will be as well that you seek another legal adviser.”

“Please don’t be angry,” said Diana distressedly, “but I *can’t* give in.”

“We shall do very well without your support, Miss Beauchamp,” he said, looking to the nap of his hat.

“I am sure you will; £30,000 is a small sum, after all.”

“Small to *you*, Miss Beauchamp; of course everything is small to a Beauchamp.”

“Don’t be satirical; I know well how poor we Beauchamps have always been, but I have felt rich with a shilling in my pocket—felt as if I could buy up the world; and I have thought big sums little, and have been terribly muddled on the point of money. I have viewed

it from a peculiar topsy-turvy stand-point, I suppose; but I'm set for one goal, and all that I make will go straightway to pay the mortgage. I may be *mulish*. I'm sorry to displease you, but——”

“I am retiring by degrees from business,” said Mr. Bovin, still stroking the nap of his hat. “I desire to spend more of my time with Mrs. Bovin” (he did not call her a dear soul this time, he was by far too cross), “and putting one thing with another, I shall be glad to hand over all the papers connected with this estate; and I must repeat my desire that you seek another legal adviser.”

Diana hesitated; she was sorry to sever the Bovin connection, which had ambled along very pleasantly all through Sir Golf's time, and but for this money would have continued to do so. She hesitated a moment longer, then said simply—

“It shall be as you wish.” And so the interview ended.

* * * * *

“Dear ! dear !” said Mrs. Battle, when Diana told her what had taken place. “Who would have thought there was so much pepper in Mr. Bovin ? I thought him one of the mildest men imaginable.”

“Money is the universal pepper-box,” said Diana.

“Dear ! dear !” reiterated Mrs. Battle. Her Dagon had fallen from his pedestal, and she had fallen with him ; for she really had nothing more explicit than “Dear ! dear !” to say on the subject.

“I shall ask Mr. Cantilupe to recommend me a lawyer ; we are going to London next week.”

Mrs. Battle rocked herself uneasily, and said “Oh ! dear,” by way of variation.

“I think I shall make Mr. Cantilupe my legal adviser,” continued Diana.

“Oh! dear, oh! dear,” said Mrs. Battle; “he will wind about your life and suffocate you.”

“The next time you take lobster salad, I shall send for Doctor Edwards,” said Diana merrily.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT THEY SAID.

“ Vacant chaff well meant for grain.”

LEOMINSTER circles were much exercised in spirit at Mr. Bovin's retirement from the management of legal matters in connection with Beauchamp Court, and also much surprised at the *on dit* about the famous picture.

“ It's the Gainsborough affair over again,” said Mrs. Marby, the wife of an architect who was considered a “light,” and consulted about all uprising villas.

Mrs. Bovin had given a small dinner-party, and the ladies were in the swing of the delightful half-hour before the gentlemen's dis-

turbing, yet pleasing, presence had scattered the fragrance of their ripe convictions on all subjects concerning town and country.

“Hardly,” said Miss Edwards; “the Gainsborough was stolen—the cases are different.”

“I was allowing for a little play of fancy,” said Mrs. Marby; “I am not a ‘tidy’ talker.”

“I am much disappointed in Miss Beauchamp,” said Mrs. Bovin; “how she could ‘get up’ in that fashion to Mr. Bovin, I can’t think. It appears she has a will of her own,—most ladies implicitly follow Mr. Bovin’s advice, and they never regret it.”

“A strong will is very unbecoming in a young person,” said Mrs. Dampy, the widow of a naval Lieutenant, who was always introduced as the relict of the late Lieutenant? “our wills should be let out by degrees.”

“True, true,” said Mrs. Farebrother, the wife of the head partner in a very enterprising

wholesale business ; “ you always are so funny, Mrs. Dampy.”

Mrs. Dampy had an established reputation in Leominster as a “ putter ” of all things under an original heading, and when *she* spoke, everybody listened and applauded. Ladies are very conservative—once they lay hold of a notion, it very rapidly takes root, and branches.

“ Mr. Bovin would soon have doubled her £30,000,” said Mrs. Bovin ; “ everything he touches turns to gold. A brass penny is a sovereign with him to-morrow.”

“ The late Lieutenant always spoke most highly of Mr. Bovin’s ‘ head,’ ” said Mrs. Dampy, “ and all his opinions I have embalmed.”

“ The model wife, both as partner and relict, always was,” said Mrs. Bovin as she sipped her coffee, and nodded approval.

“Curious custom, embalming,” said Miss Edwards, who, having united herself to *Beeton’s Universal*, felt it was time it was brought to the fore. These ladies quoted their Mr. Bovins and Lieutenants, but what was the opinion of *one* man in comparison with the vast storehouse of the *Universal*? Here was a solid covering for her single estate. Knowledge, knowledge, prolific knowledge.

“That’s a pretty conceit of Mrs. Dampy’s,” she continued, “about embalming opinions; but the natural sequence is the Pyramids. It’s a curious coincidence that ‘mummies’ were brought to my mind this morning by the Doctor, who was using some wax of that name for grafting purposes. You know what an amateur gardener the Doctor has become?”

“Does he think,” said Mrs. Farebrother, whose mind ran on dissecting lines, “that there is any correspondence between sap

and blood, or between veins and veins; does he dissect trees and plants like he does dogs and cats?"

"Wicked! wicked!" said Mrs. Dampy; "the late Lieutenant said it was sheer immorality to dissect animals."

"That opinion was worth embalming," said Mrs. Marby, who seldom spoke.

"The late Lieutenant said barbarity can never advance science. He had a great dislike to the medical profession on account of this fiendish practice."

"Doctor Edwards is a pathologist," said Miss Edwards; "in the interests of pathology, that part of medicine which relates to distempers, with the differences, causes, and effects incident to the human body, he has taken up this peculiar form of medical study."

"Live and learn," said Mrs. Dampy; "I thought distemper was a *dog* ailment."

“I was merely paraphrasing my meaning,” said Miss Edwards; I am at all times a ‘lax’ interpreter.”

“There is but little levity about you, Miss Edwards,” said Mrs. Dampy.

Whereupon Mrs. Farebrother laughed again, and said, “You always are so funny, Mrs. Dampy; who but you would have thought of linking laxness and levity?”

“I merely desired to express my appreciation of Miss Edwards’ versatility,” said Mrs. Dampy, who always crossed swords with Miss Edwards; “book-learning is one thing, originality another.” Mrs. Dampy, armed with her own and the late Lieutenant’s pristine conceptions, could raise “smiles” where prodigious learning only puckered “brows.”

Miss Edwards shouldered up. She had a peculiar movement when overpowered; it meant retreat, consultation with *Beeton*,

and a further and more daring *sortie* by-and-by.

“Sir Blaise Panmure rode into Leominster this morning,” said Mrs. Marby, whose drawing-room window faced the principal street, and who made it her special occupation to peep from behind the lace curtains at the passers-by, and report accordingly. It was astonishing the information she picked up in this mode. The very formation of “lips” was chronicled, and the meaning of “backs.”

“Then he is himself again! he has his health!” said Mrs. Bovin excitedly. “I was afraid he was injured for life.”

“He is much thinner,” said Mrs. Marby, “and lined about the brow.”

“He had no hat on, I conclude,” said Mrs. Dampy; “John Gilpin over again.”

Mrs. Farebrother was off once more in a passion of laughter.

“You always were and are so funny, Mrs. Dampy. The idea of comparing Sir Blaise Panmure, that handsome man, to round squat John Gilpin!”

“The brow betrays thought,” said Miss Edwards, emerging; “’tis the seat of learning, the lofty exponent of the intellectual organs—’tis the general air of the countenance.”

“Did he look brow-sick?” said Mrs. Bovin, whose vocabulary included many old-fashioned words which linked her to the antediluvians.

“I observed the lines about the brow,” continued Mrs. Marby, “because he was bowing to Lady Masters. Miss Masters (the hoiden) crimsoned when she saw him—tell-tale, tell-tale.”

“It would be a pretty match,” said Mrs. Bovin.

“If the lines you noticed were horizontal, they betray perplexity,” said Miss Edwards.

“What were you doing at the window, Mrs. Marby?” said Mrs. Dampy; “the late Lieut. never allowed me to stand at the window.”

“I was button-holing,” said Mrs. Marby, deprecatingly. “I require the light; I do a great deal of button-holing.”

“That’s a club trick,” said Mrs. Dampy; “that’s what old gentlemen do.”

Mrs. Farebrother now produced a handkerchief, and buried her face. “So funny, oh! so funny—who but Mrs. Dampy—button-holing—a club trick—oh! so funny.”

“Perhaps,” said Miss Edwards, “Sir Blaise is in love; love does produce lines. I was reading an ancient ballad to-day, and it said, ‘Love was engraved on the cavalier’s brow like a *hexastich*.’”

Fortunately at this moment the gentlemen entered the room, and the ladies dispersed like a covey of partridges.

Mr. Bovin filled the hearthrug with those ample proportions which seem the peculiar right of Englishmen.

Where *do* you see such sturdy backs and pronounced "wainscotings," such rosy colouring, and such mastership of house and wife and fact, as amongst the villas and square-built houses which have been erected and inhabited after careful and laborious toil by these worthy Saxons? If they still have a sturdy contempt for all foreigners and foreign ways, they owe it to a consumption of roast beef out of all proportion. They are local or national, as the case may be; and you must fit into them, or they most certainly will never fit into you.

"I've been talking of Miss Beauchamp, love," said Mrs. Bovin to Mr. Bovin.

"She is a very headstrong young lady," said he, flinging up his coat-tails in honour of the flames; "but young ladies will be young

ladies." Mr. Bovin had quite recovered his good-humour. "Local option in all things—eh, Miss Edwards?"

"Local option is a question much discussed just now," said Miss Edwards.

"It is more interesting when discussed *tête-à-tête*," said Mr. Bovin, fiddling his gold chain, and putting his head on one side as he endeavoured to "draw" Miss Edwards.

"Taken in its more serious bearings," said Miss Edwards, "on one of the questions of the day, for instance, I think——"

"Come, come, Miss Edwards," said Mr. Bovin, "you are eluding me very cleverly; but ladies are terribly clever now-a-days. I don't intend to allow that lady over there to become clever.

"Mr. Bovin, we are among friends, or I should be angry," said Mrs. Bovin.

Then she gave a long crow.

“Even Leominster ladies are catching the infection,” continued Mr. Bovin. “Now we men like to rest our weary brains in the babbling stream; we really do. There will be no babbling streams left. Railways, nothing but railways, and their offspring, *brains*. Now, stage-coaches produced quite another style of being.”

“Really, Mr. Bovin, where have you taken off now?” said Mrs. Bovin.

“Tunnels will be the future,”—commenced Miss Edwards.

“Ah! yes,” said Mr. Bovin; “talking to ladies will be like journeying in gloomy tunnels — mountains of learning on either side. Mrs. Bovin, I dare you to become clever.”

All the ladies laughed except Miss Edwards.

“A *mot*, as the late Lieutenant used to say,” said Mrs. Dampy, “is like a stroke of light-

ning, but few people have it in them to toss off a *mot*; it's like an omelette. A *mot* is produced by the action of thunder."

"There I agree with your late husband," said Mr. Bovin; "first comes a crash, then in flies the dexterous one and flashes her *mot*—eh, Mrs. Bovin?"

"First the flash, then the thunder; but I'm not nimble," said Mrs. Bovin, with a long crow.

"Never mind," said Mr. Bovin, absolutely patting her hand, "you do very well; you are not a Miss Beauchamp, to be sure. We shall see who falls in love with her: defend me from clever women! I hope there are no clever women present." Mr. Bovin rolled a peculiar glance, supposedly facetious, on Miss Edwards, who was modestly looking down in deprecatory repudiation of any such claim. Then Mr. Bovin said "Ha! ha!" He was in a

sunny mood ; he would have smiled at a kitten ; the dinner had been a success, and a rival lawyer, who had set up in a most enterprising style in Leominster, had been declared an *upstart!* and a *failure!* Mr. Bovin was perfectly happy.

CHAPTER XVIII.


TWO LADIES IN THE TWILIGHT.

“The unripe grape, the ripe and the dried.”

*“All things are changes, not into nothing,
But into that which is not at present.”*

“MR. CANTILUPE has taken a small furnished house for us a few doors from his own; he has obtained it under peculiar circumstances. He throws this — *par parenthèse* — peculiar circumstances. I like not peculiar circumstances, they are shrouded in mystery or melancholy.”

Diana was sitting in the twilight of the spring evening; the sleepy shadows gliding softly about seemed to drape her with still



grace, as, with head thrown back on her clasped hands, she watched the travelling clouds like scouts preparing the highway for Artemis.

Mrs. Battle was standing in the doorway, with a basketful of keys on her arm.

“Come, Homespun, and sit down,” continued Diana; “put away those symbols of sin which unlock the doors of sugary problems. Would that we had the keys to all life’s problems! We hold the key to so few; and those we do hold, work clumsily, and we are constantly throwing them away to try some other, which promises well and ends badly. I feel ‘*intense*’ to-night; do you ever feel ‘*intense*’? The problem that perplexes me is labelled ‘dust.’”

“Dear! dear!” said Mrs. Battle, starting forward and peering through the shadows at the shining face of the naked table and the shabby leather of the chairs; “I have always

found Jane most particular—clean as a new pin.”

“I am meditating on the universal dust-bin Mr. Cantilupe’s Diego talks about,” said Diana.

“Ah!” said Mrs. Battle, sinking heavily into an American rocking-chair. “May I ask if the letter on your lap is from Mr. Cantilupe?”

“Yes, Homespun; the glittery serpent has stood on his glittery feet and written me a letter.”

“No wonder you feel all-overish,” said Mrs. Battle.

“All-overish! a functional arrangement in green and yellow! a study in tints! ’Tis thus Mrs. Battle would rid me of my indefinable sensations, my forward projectings, my vague discernment of deep shadows.”

“I never can follow you, Miss Beauchamp,

never can. In my day, education was not carried to the pitch of nowadays. We did our samplers and our sums, and were finished off with a rap on the knuckles, at sixteen. I'm afraid you find me very stupid?"

Diana's lips had curved in a medley of smiles. "I find you as pleasant as sunshine on grass, as the scent of hay after rain; and I would say to all my sex, if you want contentment and placid joy, get into a homespun."

"The most economical wearing stuff in the world," said Mrs. Battle complacently. "Home goods for me. Home manufactures for me. Poor Mr. Battle used to push his joke (before hops went wrong) at my dislike to foreigners and foreign goods."

"You were happy," said Diana, leaning forward to watch the birth of a star. "You were satisfied; and the recollection of your married life is full of a sad, sweet joy. You

were mated; very few people, you know, are mated. The Midsummer Night's Dream is enacted over and over again in real life. Shakespeare had a great many ringed couples in his head when he evolved that masterpiece. Mighty Shakespeare! I shall go on a pilgrimage soon to Stratford-on-Avon. But tell me of Mr. Battle, if it will not pain you?"

"Pain me? Dear, dear, no!" said Mrs. Battle. "I could talk by the hour of my dear, good, departed Joseph, who from first to last was the most attentive of husbands; and that's high praise, Miss Beauchamp."

"I suppose it is," said Diana calmly.

"That hops are chancy, tiresome things, subject to blight and rot and what not, attaches no blame to him. A field of well-to-do hops, turning in healthy fashion round the poles, is a sight which speaks of a beneficent earth; but

a field of hops straggling all ways, down with the blight, and smitten before their prime, is a wretched object."

"My poor Joseph lost by his hops. He lost by them, and bitterly bemoaned his loss. He fretted himself to death at last over his troubles."

"Inward fret is as bad as rot, or mildew, or blight; it does its work in time, slow and sure as a snail's walk; it's a sapping disorder. I can't look at a field of hops now. Ah! but for the underlying principle of association, surely the tragic poetry of each life would be gone. Association is a sacrament, however, fearful to some and happy to others. There is in *all* remembrance a sacrament of holy awe. The awe may drive some people out into the wilds, some it may drive to their knees; but we *cannot* escape from association. The parent lives in the child; the traditions of a score of bygone

centuries may put forth and bud again in you or me. The long chain of incidents is perpetuated in each recurring generation, and we of to-day are grouping round them."

But Mrs. Battle had not entered into this.

"Hops are associated with Mr. Battle," she continued, "and the blossoming of hops causes me more pain than aught else."

As she spoke, her eyes filled with comfortable tears—for tears even can be eminently comfortable—stingless, comatose tears.

"The cost of the poles alone is enough to ruin you, if the hops and poles don't agree, as it were. The distracted fields I have seen—dear, dear! When I turned my back on Kent, I turned it for good. For the sixteen years I lived with Sir Golf, I never once revisited it. *Here* I have lived, and *here* I hope to end my days. Miss Beauchamp, if you marry, you will not send me away."

Mrs. Battle's homely face had gathered some pathos to itself in the starry twilight.

"Martha Battle," said Diana, with underlying earnestness in her bantering tone—and perhaps there is no earnestness which fills one with greater confidence than the earnestness which conceals its feelings beneath a cloud of mockery or laughter—"have I not implored you never to leave *me*? I cannot say I am one of few words—a form in which many people commend themselves—for I love to pour out my fugitive random thoughts in these clumsy frames we call words. But; I can say that, should you attempt to leave me, I will sit on your boxes, and that nothing short of volcanic upheavals, or eruptive measures, will uplift me from those boxes. Are you satisfied?"

Mrs. Battle sighed comfortably.

"We shall soon redeem the Court—we shall

soon be out of the hands of the Jews," said Diana, resuming her *idée mère*.

"I think Mr. Cantilupe must be a Jew," said Mrs. Battle, pricking up into alarmed speech.

"Was the serpent a Jew?" said Diana. "But what if Mr. Cantilupe be a Jew? The remark I made a minute ago would have applied to Christians just the same, had I been in their hands. The Jews have for me a peculiar interest; they are a standing witness to many truths, and on this account I am drawn towards them."

"Oily and rich, haggle and bargain, I dread them," said Mrs. Battle; "give me John Bull."

"Give me the best of all peoples," said Diana. "A perfect man (and, remember, perfection is no *trifle*) would have the blending of all nations in his composition; he

would have as many virtues as those peacocks at Whitefriars have eyes. I was over at Whitefriars, by-the-bye, to-day; and I *think* I saw Sir Blaise Panmure."

"Did you?" said Mrs. Battle, lowering her voice mysteriously. "How did he look? Many curious tales are afloat about him since he met with that accident in the hunting-field. Some say *this*, and some say *that*. Before the accident he was a hearty, cheery man, and as handsome as a statue; the wonder is, he has never married. If I were a gentleman, with an estate such as Whitefriars, would I not marry? Would I have a distant cousin watching like carrion for my gold—would I? He used to ride over here now and then to see Sir Golf, who liked him well, and he would talk 'fish' by the hour with the old gentleman, just to please him, for Sir Blaise is no angler. Great in the hunting-field, that was his

delight—horses and dogs. Sir Blaise in ‘pink’ is a notable sight.”

“I met him on the road,” said Diana, “just at his gates; I was on Venture, and had stopped to admire the peacocks. As for Whitefriars, centuries must pass before association can give a sacramental grace to such grandeur of marble and stone. Ivy and marble won’t kiss, and as for bats and owls, what have such melancholy flappings and hoots to do with young magnificence?”

“Some of the ancient parts are left,” said Mrs. Battle—“the chapel and the gardens.”

“My observations were carried on in perspective,” said Diana; “though Sir Blaise, seeing a lady all forlorn drawn up at his gates, with inquiring glances, did gallantly invite entrance.”

“Did he guess who you were? Did you tell him your name? Surely he would see

the likeness to Sir Golf," said Mrs. Battle excitedly.

"I apologized for my primitive ways and staring simplicity, and trotted home at a jog-trot, which is the best pace Venture knows," said Diana.

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Battle; "I wish he had known you were Miss Beauchamp."

"Sir Blaise is altogether preoccupied; he has a seeking expression in his eyes; he is getting rid of corporalities," said Diana.

"Dear, dear! What do you mean, Miss Beauchamp?"

"How much do you weigh, Mrs. Battle?" said Diana, laughing.

"Twelve stone; but that included an umbrella, a Shetland shawl, and my arm-bag, all of which I would *not* let out of my hands."

"Most of us are occupied in attending to the weighing machine requirements. We want to

be neither too light nor too heavy, so all our time is taken up with these matters. Sir Blaise has forgotten all about his weighing-machine," said Diana.

"Lately, he was at the gates of Death; Doctor Edwards all but gave him up," said Mrs. Battle.

"He is in search of the Holy Grail; I have divined it," said Diana. "Will he find it? Will he find it?"

But Mrs. Battle rose from the depths of the American chair, and took up her basket of keys, and left Diana to find an answer to her question in the crescent up above—in the heavens thick with kingdoms—in the first timid note of a nightingale, who had commenced his song in the night early.

vivas, and I have gathered up the bouquets which prince and peasant showered upon me indifferently in that land which is instinct with art.

“Fears! I have no fears! What am I to-night but an interpreter of the inspirations of others? I would translate them. What am I, that I should be nervous? The English are a reticent nation. *They* may not stir my pulse and draw my heart to my lips like those sun-kissed Etrurians; still, wherever the people are gathered together I respond in some fashion. Magnetism must surely lurk in numbers.”

Diana and Mrs. Battle had been in London two days, and to-night Diana was to make her first appearance at Cosmos Hall.

They were now awaiting Mr. Cantilupe, who was to introduce Diana to her audience, or at least to accompany them thither.

“That gown becomes you well,” said Mrs. Battle, surveying Diana with a dim sort of pride, which might have been maternal instinct under other circumstances.

The gown in question was made of a curious Venetian fabric, rich in colour and threaded with silver. The fashion of it was quaintly picturesque, and the careless grace of the draping lent an additional charm to the supple form of Diana.

“Where do you think I bought it? At a *fiesta* in an old half-dead village in Italy, which shook its bones together once a year, when the *fiesta* took place.

“I bought it for a few coins. I think for once I bargained. The sun and the warmth and the scents of Italy lurk in its folds; so I like it though it cost so little. Yes, I would rather wear a gown with such associations as this—for I see the crumbling old village

waking up to life at the sound of fife and drum, and the gleaming teeth of the travelling pedlar as he handed me over the roll of stuff, saying: '*Che, che!* the *Donzella* must surely be English, for she can make a better bargain than most.'—I would rather have *this* stuff twisted about me than one of Worth's latest conceptions."

Mr. Cantilupe was standing behind a Japanese screen which stood midway in the drawing-room.

That he had entered noiselessly and overheard part of the conversation, through refusing to be announced, was only natural.

In the midst of a pause he advanced, and so frightened Mrs. Battle that she nearly fell into the wraith-like arms he at once extended to receive her.

Poor Mrs. Battle gaspingly evaded them,

and, sinking into an arm-chair, declared her nervousness.

“I frighten most people,” said Mr. Cantilupe; “I have, however, not succeeded in frightening Miss Beauchamp; but then,” he added, turning towards Diana, and bowing, “there is a touch of Zingara wildness in your complex organization.”

Mr. Cantilupe was reading Diana as you or I might read a book, but he had so read her from the first glance.

He read off everybody, for he had a strange discernment of character, and he could lay his finger on the point which would wreck a man or woman, or the circumstance which would develop a power for good or evil undreamt of, with the precision of a surgeon who knew where the knife must cut or the lance probe.

“Come, Miss Beauchamp, we must be

going," he said, after a rapid survey of Mrs. Battle's features, which were settling into placidity once more.

"Now, not a word as we drive to the Cosmos," he added, as he placed himself *vis-à-vis* to Diana in the brougham; "you must be up in the clouds or down in the wastes, listening to the hollow voice of the wind, as with wailing accent it carries Rizpah in its wake. Meantime, Mrs. Battle and I can discourse, and if you mistake our murmurings for the song of ring-doves, well——"

Mr. Cantilupe was absolutely becoming flesh-tinted, yet Mrs. Battle shuddered, and saw the serpent at the Zoo gliding, eating dust as it moved, more pronouncedly than ever.

Cosmos Hall was thronged with the *élite* of fashion and letters.

Diana's reputation had wandered from

Italy like some well-known melody; but without such carrying Mr. Cantilupe's wand could evoke a crowd—a prime crowd.

Yes, here was the crowd of living souls, all, or mostly all, curious with the momentary curiosity which their crowded days permitted, to see this modern Diana who had acquired so great a reputation in Italy as the exponent of the strong songs of poets and prose-singers, and who uttered those songs so sweetly or so sombrely that even the creators found no fault with her interpretation of the colour of their thoughts.

Cosmos Hall was fitted up with all the latest improvements which modern taste approves, or fears to disapprove. Nobody was so artistic as Mr. Cantilupe without being an artist, and Mr. Cantilupe had been the moving spirit in the matter of decoration.

“One looks so frightful in most concert-

rooms," said Lady Mary Charteris to her *pro tem.* friend, Miss Novello; "but everybody looks tolerable under this rose-tinted improvement of the electric light.

"Why, I declare Miss Dare's wrists look poetic; see, she is toying with her fan, and making believe Cronie Felton is murmuring unutterables, while we all know he is out on the weather. He thinks that's the only safe topic for a fellow with half-a-million a year."

Miss Novello smiled; the smile was peculiar.

"You are a match for that dreadful Mr. Cantilupe when you smile like that, Felicia. You are inscrutable. I dislike inscrutable people. Why can't we be like glasses—honest, if sometimes displeasing. Mr. Cantilupe resembles the 'Man in the Mask.'"

"I think he is more like a double acrostic, with fleshy members," said Miss Novello.

“How has he obtained such mastery over individuals? He goes everywhere, and knows everybody. Some people say he has a title, but disdains ‘handles.’ Some people say he likes power, and so plays on human beings as a clever performer on various instruments. But guesses are unsatisfactory and dull emanations from mystified intelligences. To me, this man is interesting, and yet I could hardly explain why. Could you imagine him making a wrong move on his chess-board? He has a grip on his enemies’ castles and kings and queens, which may well inspire them with dread.”

“Where is Mrs. Cantilupe?” said Lady Mary. “Is there a Mrs. Cantilupe?”

“Would a Mrs. Cantilupe come in on the chess-board?” said Miss Novello. “No, no; she would rob him of his unique personality, turn him into prose *enfin*. A wife would

naturally be a species of translation of Mr. Cantilupe. He would lose his mysticism. It is very difficult to weave cobweb speculations about a married man ; imagination becomes frost-bitten the moment Madame appears panting with housekeeping duties, or languid with elegant ease. Mr. Cantilupe enjoys too well the odd mastery he has somehow obtained over people."

"Some people say he is fabulously wealthy," said Lady Mary ; "his trade evidently pays—nothing like trade, after all. He has a queer trade of some sort, you know ; but, hush ! here comes Miss Beauchamp. Do you see Tharos Savage sitting over there ? If he raves, everybody will rave."

An English audience is, perhaps, of all audiences, the most absolutely critical. A Parisian audience is prepared to go into ecstasies or to ridicule ; an Italian ready to

admire if there be a loophole for admiration to filter through; but the *élite* of a London season are like a row of azaleas—scentless, perfect, stiff, firmly rooted in their tubs, demanding admiration for *themselves*, and looking contemptuously on alien claims for admiration—even though they are collected for the purpose of seeing and hearing.

Mr. Cantilupe found his proffered hand declined, with some explanation which seemed to satisfy him; and it was alone Diana faced her audience.

The platform was removed some few feet farther from the *fauteuils* than is usual. It was exquisitely inlaid with lapis lazuli. A late Russian prince had presented Mr. Cantilupe with the priceless stone for some huge benefit conferred. Large palms formed a splendid background; deep-hued rugs lent warmth and comfort; cushions invited you to squat like a

houri ; and curiously carved chairs, which promised to fit your mood, extended or curtailed their arms here and there. Of drapery, too, there was no lack ; curtains, in which the shoaling tints seemed borrowed from the rainbow, fed the eye with colour, and set you speculating from whence this sense of pleasure in colour came.

“Too, too utter,” commenced Tharos Savage, as he raised his heavy eyelids, and gazed at Diana.

“I claim her,” said Ruce Kant ; “she is more of my school than yours. She is a child of the future, a creature to set you speculating. Before she opens her lips, I declare to you, her spirit is dominant over body. She knows nothing of twilight regions, in which the mass of people live and move ; she holds by a world which is peopled by the geniuses of the past, present, and future ! she dialogues with them

—all of us sitting here are nothing to her. She is looking over our heads.

“Don’t you see the forward glance or onward light in her extraordinary eyes? How she has thought and speculated, and held on to the beginning and end of her experience, and passed and repassed from one to another. She is an isolated being within a being, and must remain so. ’Tis because of this flexible nature, which corresponds with her lithe form, that she lends herself to dramatic personations with such accentuated ability. She will penetrate at once to the vital point in a poem, and every syllable will be coloured with the great fact to which all the scene is driving. Listen, Tharos! I would not care to know this Diana; I have read her as I read Tennyson’s last poem, by the light of inner consciousness. Best so.”

“You extravagant fellow!” said Tharos;

“you are always turning people into poems, or novels, or histories, or fairy tales. This girl lives in a curious old moated description of place in Herefordshire. She wants to pay off the mortgage, and so lends herself for our entertainment.”

“Ah!” said Mr. Kant, “she will succeed if all goes well.”

“If and but—epitaphs for tombstones—eh, Ruce?”

But Ruce had fallen to musing on Diana’s upturned face, as the first bar of “Rizpah” rang through the hall, and the hush which attends power fell on each soul.

“Whether it be Tennyson, Emerson, Walt Whitman, or that thunderbolt Shakespeare, she is unequalled in one and all,” said Lady Mary Charteris, as she beckoned to Mr. Cantilupe before leaving the hall, and congratulated him on the success of his *protégée*. “I feel a

better woman for hearing her—I really do ; and it's something to feel a little taller—I am easily dwarfed."

Then Lady Mary asked if Miss Beauchamp would give a recitation at her "At Home" on June the 4th—whether Mr. Cantilupe could possibly arrange such an intellectual treat.

"Tell her, she will turn us all into intellectual *gourmets* ; and beg her to improve the tone of our minds by her admirable renderings of genius."

Mr. Cantilupe bent his mystic glances on Lady Mary, and assured her that he would do his best to persuade Miss Beauchamp to extend her field of operations, and to go in for a regular campaign.

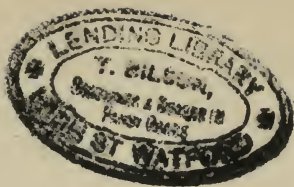
"She will light us up with some of her own peculiar fire," continued Lady Mary ; "we are such a set of unlighted candles—some tallow, some wax, some composite ; but we want lighting

dreadfully. Miss Beauchamp is intellectually ablaze."

"Vulcan hovered over her cradle, perhaps," said Felicia Novello; "certainly there is no lack of fire."

Mr. Cantilupe bowed; if there are such things as proprietary bows, such was his bow. Cosmos Hall belonged to him; so might "The Diana." Mr. Cantilupe had never failed of possessing any object he had been covetously-minded to obtain.

Then Lady Mary moved away, followed by Miss Novello; and Mr. Cantilupe, bowing here and there abstractedly, and borne aloft on the surface of inner speculations, escorted Diana and Mrs. Battle to M—— Street.



CHAPTER XX.

MRS. BATTLE'S LAST DISCOVERY.

“But I shall say no more of this at this time, for this is to be felt and not to be talked of; and they who never touched it with their fingers, may secretly perhaps laugh at it in their hearts, and be never the wiser.”

“THE papers are praising you loudly. I don’t know whether you consider yourself out of the reach of praise?”

Mr. Cantilupe had called the following afternoon, and found Diana arranging flowers after the Japanese fashion—singly.

“I like to sway people,” said Diana.

“You will not read what the papers say about you,” continued Mr. Cantilupe. “The

critics have dipped their pens in honey-pots."

Diana smiled rarely. "Praise is better than blame; still I will not read what they say, because I can tell in one moment if I have caught my audience—caught the best part of them—penetrated beneath the outer wrappings."

"What does Miss Beauchamp consider the best part of an individual? Surely not the clumsy construction shaped like a triangle, the heart, which is for ever striving with its avowed enemy, the round or conical-shaped apparatus, the head?"

Mr. Cantilupe was standing at the mantelpiece in his favourite attitude, only the mantelpiece was a bank of flowers, so his background was floral.

"Rival systems," he continued abstractedly, plucking a flower and placing it in his button-

hole—"opposing forces—the more brain the less heart, at least I think so."

"I differ with you," said Diana. "The finest orators have invariably been men of heart. What is a speech without passion? And passion is not seated in the brain, but cold reason. If you would speak with living power, you must have come through various stages of human realism; 'tis only when heart and brain are united in the deepest and tenderest of ties that you come across a great orator. Napoleon was no orator—he had no heart."

Mr. Cantilupe smiled. Diana and he were approaching those terms of intimacy when a difference of opinion lends piquancy to conversation. Matters were progressing.

"The pathetic in Art or Literature is the first step towards ruin," said Mr. Cantilupe. "Gain the brains of an audience, and you

have gained the best part of it ; let the hearts follow. But hearts ! who believes in such *outré* and rustic barbarisms in these enlightened days ; surely not Miss Beauchamp ? ”

He paused for one moment, looking downwards at the perfect contour of his foot, which was long and thin. “ In pure Art, for instance, the intrusion of heart is fatal. The soft smile playing about the lips of the Hermes of Praxiteles foreshadows the doom of Grecian Art ; the greatest Greek orators shrink from the expression of tender pathos.”

“ From whence does all strong and noble emotion emanate ? ” said Diana.

“ From the brain, Miss Beauchamp. Possess the brains of a man or woman, and, as I said before, the heart, if heart there be, will follow.”

“ I differ with you. Possess the heart of a man or woman, and let the brains follow ; they

are a dry and prosy set of guests, when compared with a living, breathing human touch."

Mr. Cantilupe removed his gaze from the exquisite contour of his foot, and fixed it on Diana's hands, which were still busy with the flowers, and was silent.

"I shall be so glad," said Diana suddenly, "when I have redeemed the Court, and can sit down mute, listening only to the voices of Nature. Is this paganism? Inherited memories seem to have come about me with my new possession. I believe, after all, I shall become a *vrai* Philistine in the course of time. If we change our skins once in seven years, why should we not change our natures? My Bohemianisms may drop away from me little by little."

"So you would dwell alone at Beauchamp," said Mr. Cantilupe.

*"In wasteful beauty showered, thy smile unseen ;
Unseen of men."*

"If you would redeem the Court rapidly, you must work hard. Will you give recitations at private houses?"

"Of course I will. I'm set for an object, and to attain that object I would burrow with my nails through any hole up into light. Mr. Cantilupe," Diana added gracefully, "I feel I can never thank you sufficiently for your generous interest in me; and the worst of it is, I can never repay you."

"You have filled Cosmos Hall," said Mr. Cantilupe, "and this is my latest speculation."

"It would have filled anyhow," said Diana. "People will collect where such a novel style of elegance invites them. Look at our miserable concert-rooms!"

"The concerts of the future will be differently organized," said Mr. Cantilupe. "Music may proceed from the heart of a

flower, or the throat of a bird; mystery is the essence of *all beauty*. Miss Beauchamp, Diego is downstairs with some pictures I have brought for your acceptance. May he submit them to you?"

Diana assented, and Mrs. Battle, who had just entered the room, managed a "sigh" rather pronouncedly.

"Sighs proceed from extremes," said Mr. Cantilupe, as he released Mrs. Battle's hand. "I could not bear to think unhappiness was the mother of this one."

Mrs. Battle unclasped her reticule, and commenced to embroider her initials "M. B." on a handkerchief. She wanted to sigh again, but withheld it, and only said, "I am *quite* well, thank you."

Mr. Cantilupe smiled, and Mrs. Battle, catching the smile somehow, grew red and hot and cold, and began to embroider "M. B." upside

down ; whereupon Mr. Cantilupe drew her attention to the fact, and then displayed his own white silk one, whereon was embroidered a wonderful design, where initials were lost in enigmatical characters.

“Is this intended for a coronet ?” said Diana, as she examined it, half negligently, half interestedly.

“Perhaps so,” said Mr. Cantilupe, “I hardly know ; but such baubles as coronets, who sets any value on them now ? The coronet I value is a coronet composed of brains, every ball one of the sciences.”

Mrs. Battle sighed again. This man was as far-fetched as Diana ; surely, if ever two atoms were meant to meet, these two were ! Mrs. Battle would thankfully have grasped the fact that no two atoms really meet—they only seem to. But she was not a philosopher, except in an elementary style of her own—she had ex-

periences ; and *why* Mr. Cantilupe reminded her of serpents and dust-eating she could not imagine ; yet so it was.

“Place the portfolio on this table, Diego,” said Mr. Cantilupe.

The dwarf did his behest, and then left the room ; but, as he passed Diana, he glanced furtively at her.

“What a clever face Diego has,” said Diana. “He looks as if he could master a secret treaty ; he looks as if he could rise above circumstances, and become great.”

Mr. Cantilupe made no reply as he unclasped the portfolio ; but, as he handed a water-coloured sketch of the mountain of Samothrace to Diana, he said, “Some people, to attain an object, must climb many a Samothrace. Circumstances are some people’s tools, and they carve fortunes out of opportunities as they float by them.”

Diana's head was bent over the sketch of Samothrace. She did not notice the singular expression with which Mr. Cantilupe was regarding her. Was it Love?

Oh, mystic passion, into whose heights and depths and awful fires few enter (perchance fortunately), for Love has many chambers in its wonderful palace. One room is full of wooden toys, another full of mechanical contrivances, another full of flowers, another full of musical instruments, another full of delicate viands and costly wines—each room has a crowd of votaries.

But built far away from all these chambers stands one solitary little room, into which few enter, for a strange incense fills the atmosphere, and those who once inhale it are given a faithful memory and an immortal passion. With *them* every sensibility is quickened into rapture or pain as the fra-

grance of that rare incense overpowers them. These are they who love alway, and have passed through the cleansing fires of divine, yet awful Love.

Could Mr. Cantilupe love? There are thousands of marriages and perhaps a few unions—thousands of marriages arranged, and perhaps a few hundreds which know nothing of arrangements, which are the fusion of spirits who meet and, meeting, are one. You may miss your mate. All your life you may be conscious of some spring which has never yielded its joyous music, because the right wand never tapped the surface; you may be married by force of circumstance to one to whom the finer tones of your nature are like a dumb instrument—still Love continues its pirouettes, and is crowned with eternal youth, and introduces its votaries into its various chambers accord-

ing as it discovers their various capabilities.

Could Mr. Cantilupe love? This problem might well puzzle his astute brain. He never had, consciously, felt as he now felt for this Diana. A great longing to possess (in as far as one being can possess another) this rare creature had beset him. She gratified eye, head, and the apparatus Mr. Cantilupe playfully termed the triangle. Yes, his eye found exultant pleasure in her—she carried such distinction with her. It lurked in every fold of her drapery, in every posture, entrance, exit, and circumstance. The warm tint of her hair, the changing, shifting expression in her eyes, the chiselling of her upper lip, the fine hands and feet, all—all delighted Mr. Cantilupe.

Then her head, not only admirably posed, but admirably filled with just the kind of

knowledge that made her a charming companion and spirit-catcher; and, beyond all this, Mr. Cantilupe discerned that there lurked in Diana a sprite as yet sleeping, but *there* to awake at some one's touch. Ah, yes! if Diana loved, she would love not with a bread-and-butter love, but with tropical intensity. This, also, Mr. Cantilupe coveted. He would like, amidst the machinations of his life, to have this fine gold thread weaving in and out—this purifying love.

Mr. Cantilupe's reflections generally ended by passing his hand lightly over his brow, as if to sweep aside intricate or intrusive speculations; his hand crossed his brow now, and the intent gaze of a moment ago had vanished.

"Tell me about Samothrace," said Diana.

"I was there last spring," he said, "supping with Bulgarians, breakfasting with Greeks, and making pilgrimages to Olympus and

Dodona. Of course you are acquainted with the poetic myths which have weaved themselves about this island. You will remember the wedding of Kadmus and Harmonia, to which all the gods came with gifts—Demeter with an ear of corn, Hermes with a lyre, and Athena with a necklace. For wild luxuriance of vegetation nothing could surpass what I saw—the grass hardly visible for the profusion of flowers, and the herbage growing down to the brink of the sea. Then the intoxicating fragrance of the flowers! Ah! this island mountain is like a fairy tale or magical scene.

“But to see Samothrace at its sublimest, you must see it in the throes of passion; you must see it storm-swept, then the changeful awfulness of Nature startles you. I saw it thus, the sea white with foam, and the vast mass of the mountain of Samothrace

towering above me, its summits buried in driving clouds, and its tremendous precipices wreathed in mists which now revealed and now obscured its rugged sides."

"I must go there," said Diana impulsively ;
"in such a spot I would be buried."

Mr. Cantilupe waved his hand deprecatingly.

"That spectre — Death — Miss Beauchamp, should have no acquaintance with you."

"Ah ! but I often think of this mystery—Death," said Diana.

Again Mr. Cantilupe waved his hand gracefully, and continued—

"I ascended this sea mountain one lovely morning, and felt enchantment everywhere—shady nooks, fountains, aromatic fragrance of shrubs, varied views of the sea and of Athos and Rodopé. But enough of Samothrace—interesting though it be. Here is a sketch of

Thebes. You recollect the story of Amphion building Thebes with his lyre. See the ancient walls rising brick by brick to the sound of the lyre. Don't you think these workmen must have been refined in some sort by the delicate music?"

"The very bricks look cultivated," said Diana, laughing. "Oh! those ancients, how I delight in them! Surely they lived in sound, in a world peopled with myths and shadows which had sprung from the substance of long ago—a world full of Apollos and Orpheuses, of Junos and Jupiters. What delicate fancies, what exquisite sensibilities, we can trace in the memory of these bygone peoples. If the earth was to them full of supernatural mystery and hazy dreams which kindled their imagination, surely *their* faith, dark as it was, was infinitely higher than the barren tree with its unwholesome mate-

rialistic fruit which *this* century has produced."

"The supernatural has never had for me any truth difficult of digestion," said Mr. Cantilupe. "We move towards our appointed end by steps slow and sure; our paths are crossed by those beings who are destined to intermingle the threads which hold them *here* with the threads which equally hold us *here*. Sometimes these threads get knitted up in an apparently inextricable confusion, and only the Iris, who cuts the threads of life, can undo them. Shadow meets shadow, substance embraces substance, spirit gropes after spirit, and, as Diego says, the dust-bin enlarges itself to receive *all*."

Diana shivered slightly, and Mr. Cantilupe's watchful eyes detected the movement.

"After all, why should we shrink from the

embrace of the prolific earth?" said she. "How lavish she is, how generous, how jovial! I have often thought if we want to catch the very spirit of Nature, we must see her sending home her glorious corn, her bounteous grain. In those sheaves I catch her smile. Ah! she has gleanings for us all—the vast thought of Nature. Yes; I feel sure I shall be willing to yield myself to her embrace when——"

But Diana did not finish her sentence; her eyes were riveted on the picture which Mr. Cantilupe was holding before her.

It was a water-colour sketch of a monk kneeling in his cell; behind him lay in an allegory his past life, and the powers of the artist were finely expressed in outlines which revealed ghastly truths. Here a skeleton grinned; here noxious weeds grew on the grass of unhallowed desire; here a dance of

satyrs; whilst before him lay a tract of land flooded in light. And as the eye rested on this serene spot, a ray of joy seemed to fill and satisfy the soul.

Towards this spot the eyes of the praying monk were directed with ineffable yearning, and even as he prayed the strange beams from this blessed haven seemed to rest upon his brow, and throw into yet gloomier shadow the background of the picture.

Even Mrs. Battle rose from her chair, and came forward to examine it as Diana's delighted exclamations repeated themselves.

"A Jesuit!" said Mrs. Battle, "a designing fellow, doubtless, and deserved to be haunted by those dancing gentlemen in the background. My belief is, London is chokeful of Jesuits in disguise. They creep into houses, and lead impressionable ladies astray."

"Homespun! Homespun!" said Diana,

shaking her head in mock sorrow, "you are the most accentuated Jane Bull in the British Isles. Why can't you turn Cosmopolitan under my tuition?"

"Cosmopolitan! rubbish!" said Mrs. Battle. "No, no; I have a horror of the Jesuits—all for *their* order, all for *your* money."

"I have always been much interested in the order of Jesu," said Diana, turning once more to Mr. Cantilupe, who was silently replacing the sketches in the portfolio.

"Miss Beauchamp's interests must always be of the *genus* cultivated," said he. "I have found the Jesuit Fathers interesting companions."

"I hardly like to accept these lovely water-colours," said Diana; "but I could spend hours looking at the monk."

"The monk has a history," said Mr. Canti-

lupe: "the picture came into my possession through an ancestress."

"Won't you keep it?" said Diana.

"No, no; it could not be in more appreciative hands than yours."

Then Mr. Cantilupe looked at his watch, and bade Diana adieu.

As soon as the door closed Mrs. Battle exclaimed, "Mark my words, Miss Beauchamp—Mr. Cantilupe is a Jesuit! Oh, dear heart! He will wind about your life with his doctrines and queer ways, if you are not warned and take warning. His eyes are never off you—watching, watching! He has designs of some sort—maybe love, maybe hate; for love and hate walk side by side. I've heard, 'Fierce love, fierce hate.'"

Mrs. Battle looked so prophetic, and her colour had risen so high, that Diana's laughter was checked.

“I don’t like you in this mood, Mrs. Battle ; you remind me of cows when they chew bitter cuds. Come to dinner, and get amongst salad pastures, and you will be my homespun again.”

CHAPTER XXI.

A FATHER CONFESSOR.

"Personality remains ; years, effects, events, hopes, persons flit past as in the mystic march of life ; but WE remain."

"That great mystery Time. Were there no other, the illimitable, silent, never-resting thing called Time, rolling, rushing on swift, silent, like an all-embracing ocean-tide, on which we and all the Universe swim like exhalations, like apparitions which ARE and then ARE NOT ; this is for ever very literally a miracle, a thing to strike us dumb, for we have no word to speak about it."

KEITH DE QUINCEY and Sir Blaise were strolling on the terrace of Whitefriars. The letter which Sir Blaise had sent to his friend had followed him to a port on his way from

China, where he had been for several years ; and he, being a man with few ties, had hastened to Whitefriars on his arrival in England, to renew his acquaintance with his old college friend.

Mr. De Quincey has a personality—not only eloquent of biceps but of intellect. He might be the leader of a party or a sect ; nothing seemed too big or too small for his mastership. His expression was dignified ; he penetrated you with the purity of a gaze directed inwards. He seemed to read your soul.

Sir Blaise was talking eagerly as he walked up and down the terrace, and De Quincey was listening with that wholeness of interest which lends harmony to all giving and receiving, in whatever garb or circumstance it may be interchanged. 'Tis hard to grasp a brass coin in exchange for a gold one, but

such is often the case in a world where full value is but seldom received.

You cast your rich grain before a pre-occupied or unappreciative soul, and as you retire with your sack filled with chaff in return, you wonder at its light weight, and sigh in secret over the unsatisfactoriness of dealing in that market where *words* are the exchange and mart—words with their mighty power, their pregnant meaning, their swiftly flying attributes, which pass and repass over oceans, continents, and tracts, to vibrate through the ages, and confront us in the end. Surely language beareth many fruits; some good to the taste and refreshing to the soul, and some which infect the system and give it a meal of deadly food.

Mr. De Quincey was a charming listener; he drew your thoughts to the surface by the very expectancy of his expression; he awaited

a message from you—a message of some sort ; he treated you as one who must surely have some special revelation wrapped up in the outward clay—some Divine foretaste or reminiscence of that Divine Past which had created the Adam. He sought your spirit ; however sunk amidst the *débris* of time, he seemed to compel it forth and bid it to the feast. He raised you to his level, he never sunk to yours. And yet, though the general aspect of the man seemed to convey the word of command, there was not the faintest aggressive outline.

Sir Blaise swung his stick, as he walked with long strides ; and now and then his hand sought his moustache impatiently as his spirit sought to reveal its yearnings and its fears.

“Death is an ugly fellow, De Quincey ; the man who has a tussle with him knows that.

As I lay on my bed, I cried out, 'I'm no match for you'; and I vowed, should God spare me, I would be off in the quest after salvation, in *whatever* form I could find it. I would be Monk, Priest, Hallelujah-captain, *anything*, so long as I could feel I had something to hold by. A wily fellow is Death; he sha'n't catch me unawares next time. I shouted 'Fool, oh worse than fool,' as I writhed in the agonies of that twist which all but did for me.

"Edwards heard me; he held me delirious half the time. At last, I thought of *you*; and now, De Quincey, I feel you can and will help me in this quest; when I bring the question home, *Have you?* you will answer, *I have*. But first tell me, why are you not in the conventional garb of the Church?"

"Because I hold no cure. I am a priest, and occasionally I wear a coat to my heels, and put my throat in a 'stock'; but my cus-

tom is to catch men unawares, and this the conventional 'cloth' prohibits. A parson is as conspicuous as a bird of paradise."

"True," said Sir Blaise.

"Neither do I absolutely belong to any Party in the Church," continued De Quincey. "I find sympathy with all. If the High Party have grasped the beauty that lurks in harmony of creatures of sound and creatures of sense, I find that the Low have sternly gripped at the colder beauty which lurks in an austere and simple faith: whilst the Broad, in a great love and sorrow for the ills of mankind, are whispering of eternal hope and a paradise for ransomed man at last. A sectarian spirit is not Christlike. In frequent communions, I find the mystic bread which feeds my soul; I find also the corrective to gross sin. In the mingling of trained voices, and the mellow breathings of the

finest music, I find an ever-upward tendency which bears my spirit to the very gates of Heaven. My senses are keenly alive to symbols of sound and sense ; so much so, that sometimes I abstain from such luxuries by retiring into the barest of churches to commune without any of these external, yet beautiful, aids to prayer."

"I am so wedded to a conventional belief that has not a grain of life in it," said Sir Blaise, "I feel as if I must undo my faith to have the right faith. Do you understand me ?"

"Perfectly, Panmure. Conventionality, 'tis the curse of creeds ; and creeds, 'tis the *laquais* following on the heels of civilization. You have been brought up to believe, and so it is more difficult for you to believe than a heathen, paradoxical though it sounds."

As De Quincey spoke, the pale beauty of the spring morning slowly broke through a rosy

cloud, and threw her clear beams on the pathway. When God shines into our hearts, He lights up our darkness much as this. Love, the child of Infinite pity, shines down on the Infinite sadness of human life.

Unless life be overshadowed by love, how can we bear it? See written over Life, Love; over Death, Love; and in Love see God.

“But justice, De Quincey,” continued Sir Blaise. “I feel so vile.”

“A father so loves his child that his sins must be covered, so he robes him in a garment dipped in a strange wine-press that was trodden by Scarred Feet.” Then De Quincey added fervently, “Oh, Infinite Love and Infinite Pity, who wore a crown of thorns that we might wear a crown of glory, how can we abase ourselves sufficiently in Thy sight, or wash the feet of Thy poor sufficiently to show forth our gladness in *Thy* service?”

“I will give alms,” said Sir Blaise eagerly.
“I have never held my hand from a beggar yet ; but *now* I will give a tenth of all I have.”

“Give yourself first, Panmure. Lose yourself in the Infinite Love which stands revealed in the Marred Face of the Son of God.”

Then the two men in silence passed through the hall of Whitefriars.



CHAPTER XXII.

ETHICS ON HORSEBACK.

“Eternity represents life as fully possessed.”

“This strange short struggle, so bright with joy, so dark with sorrow, involves the possibility—nay, the certainty—of pain.”

SIR BLAISE and De Quincey, after that walk on the terrace, found that a union of spirit had been entered into between them, which was likely to reach out and on into the limitless.

“You say you are no Party-man, De Quincey,” said Sir Blaise, as a few mornings after the conversation we have narrated they were riding leisurely across country; “yet I think there is more of the Anglican than the

Puritan about you. The Christ I see in you is not an austere Christ. Puritanism links works of Art and Beauty with Paganism. *You* say 'Very good' of the world of Nature and the world of Art."

"Because I see Divinity everywhere," said De Quincey. "I see in Art the expression of the lineaments of a Godlike man, however little the artist may deem from whence his inspirations come. All genius, all beauty, is a revelation. Poets may use their powers amiss, artists their brushes, sculptors their chisels; but the gifts are the inherited gifts of the sons of God—prodigals though they may be.

"And so as I gaze on the creations of God and man, I see the links which no time can destroy, binding the child to the Father; and yet more, in every faint upward struggle into light, I see the Christ in my brother, in every morsel of bread and cup of cold water given

in His name ; in every hospital built, and almshouse endowed, in every act of charity, and in every deed of mercy."

"True," said Sir Blaise ; "your doctrine is full of hope."

"Hope?" said De Quincey ; "we are living in glorious times. Never was there a moment when men are so willing to tolerate all forms so long as the Gospel be spread. I look forward, Panmure, to that day when *one* Church triumphant shall march under one banner to meet the returning Christ."

"It seems a Utopian dream," said Sir Blaise, "while a dominant priesthood reigns on one side of the water, and a distracted Church split up into a thousand factions on the other."

"The Dove of Peace is hovering overhead," said De Quincey ; "she will rest her wings ere long on a safely anchored ark."

They were descending an incline as De Quincey spoke, and before them lay a level road, with a wealth of pasture land on either side. When they reached the bottom, De Quincey drew rein, and looked long and delightedly at the serene landscape.

“Some men’s minds are like these fair English pastures. Such was Keble’s throughout the *Christian Year*. One feels the influence of such days as these; the soft radiance of spring light, the blossoming of early green, the promise of a rich and bounteous harvest, which is the underlying charm of a May morning: with such a scene you associate Heaven.

“I think the passage in the *Confessions of St. Augustine* concerning Heaven are so beautiful. Augustine was talking with his mother as they two were leaning out of the window of the house in Ostia where they were staying, and

wondering what the life of God's saints would be in Heaven.

“ I remember St. Augustine says :—‘ When our discourse came to that point that the highest delight and brightest of all the carnal senses seemed not fit to be so much as named with that life's sweetness, we, lifting ourselves yet more ardently to the Unchanging One, did by degrees pass through all things bodily, beyond the Heaven even, and the sun and stars.

“ ‘ Yea, we soared higher yet by inward musing. We came to our own minds, and we passed beyond them that we might reach that place of plenty where Thou feedest Israel for ever with the food of truth, and where life is the wisdom by which all these things are made ; and whilst we were discoursing and panting after her, we slightly touched on her by the whole effort of our heart.

“ ‘And we sighed, and there left bound the firstfruits of the Spirit, and came back again to the sounds of our own mouths—to our own finite language.

“ ‘And what we then said was in this wise:—If to any the tumult of the flesh were hushed—hushed the images of the earth and air and waters; hushed, too, the poles of Heaven; yea, the very soul be hushed to herself, and by not thinking on self transcend self, hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, every tongue and every sign, and whatever exists only in transition; if these should all be hushed, having only roused our ears to Him that made them, and He speak alone, not by them but by Himself, that we might hear His word, not through any tongue of flesh nor angel’s voice, nor sound of thunder, nor in the dark riddle of a similitude, but might hear Him whom in these

things we love, His very self (without any aid from these), even as we two for that brief moment had touched the Eternal Wisdom. Could this be continued on, and other visions far unlike it be withdrawn, and this one vanish and absorb and wrap up its beholders amid these inward joys, so that life might be for ever like that one moment of understanding, were not this, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" And when shall that be? Shall it be when we rise again, but shall not all be changed?"

"In this vision, St. Augustine touched for one moment the supreme heights of 'love,'" said Sir Blaise meditatively; "the ethics of love. Have you ever tried to comprehend this mystery, De Quincey?"

"The mystery of a human love?" said De Quincey. "Yes, often. Carlyle says, except musically and in the language of poetry, it

can hardly be so much as spoken about. We must conclude he was speaking satirically, as he played a brass band in front of most subjects under the sun.

“Schopenhauer tells us that love is nothing more than ‘a will to live,’ and brings down this divine illumination to a mere desire to carry on life under its highest form. He earnestly invokes his followers to root out the ‘will to live’ principle within them, and thus tend towards his ideal consummation—a world so purged by his doctrines that the human race at last ceases to be.”

“In the face of death, I wonder if this philosopher would find himself completely emancipated from hereditary instincts?” said Sir Blaise.

“I think not,” said De Quincey meditatively. “Mr. Guinner relates of Schopenhauer that he was much agitated when looking at a portrait

of Rance, the founder of La Trappe. Something in the purified intelligence of the face filled him with strange awe, and he exclaimed — ‘*This is a matter of grace.*’ Ah! they may be *très affirmatifs dans la négation*, but there comes across each soul now and again the little flash—the mystic hint—which refuses to be silenced by opposing voices.”

“I shall not attempt to root out the ‘will to live’ principle,” said Sir Blaise, “but look into the ethics of this passion when in my turn I am attacked.”

De Quincey smiled.

“Yes, Panmure, you must marry, and let your whole nature blossom out—for not to love wisely is absolutely a moral misfortune. Look into the *form* of the affection—never mind the substance—for love can take countless forms; it has two hemispheres in its composition. The ancient world treated love as their slave; but,

with Christianity, entered purity and mysticism, and love, which is conscious of a calm sacramental constancy."

"Yet, amongst the ancients, we find many toilers and feelers after God," said Sir Blaise; "look at Marcus Aurelius."

"God has never left man since the creation," said De Quincey. "Man has left God. Buried amidst a sea of myths and fables was the one true God. We can trace Him in every creed and every faith; but the vision Marcus sighed for was the vision of the Christ. He lived, as one has finely said, 'as a member of a sacred Cosmos and co-operator of ordering gods'; but a risen Christ has transmogrified Christendom, and explained to us the mystery of our being."

"I wish," said Sir Blaise, "some thinker would, in two short sentences, comprise the entire teaching of the school of Christ. How

would *you* sum up the whole doctrine of the Gospel? I want something defined — something as free from ornamentation as Greek Art; the various schools perplex me.”

De Quincey’s steadfast gaze was concentrated on Sir Blaise as he answered—

“The Gospel is summed up in these two sentences, and in these two I have found anchorage—‘Thy sins be forgiven thee.’ ‘Go, and sin no more.’”

Sir Blaise lifted his hat off his head, and said reverently—“May I also find anchorage in this short but perfect Gospel!”

CHAPTER XXIV.

FOUR O'CLOCK TEA.

“We are golden averages—volitant stabilities—compensated or periodic errors—houses founded on the sea.”

“WELL, mamma, whom do you think I met this morning?” said Francisca Masters, as four o'clock found Lady Masters and her daughters gathered for tea in the small room appropriated for that purpose at Deneclose. The walls were painted with the flowering shrub, in every stage of development, and a profusion of China tea-pots peeped from every imaginable nook and corner; whilst the ceiling seemed composed of one huge Chinese

umbrella, which showed the "China boys" at work in the tea trade business in every possible aspect of occupation.

"Who, but lost Sir Blaise?" continued Francisca gaily, as she turned the tap of the te urn. "What has happened to him I cannot tell; but he is altered, and I think love of some sort must be at the bottom of it, for whenever people are soft with a peculiar softness 'tis love; oh, be sure 'tis love. You see, Cecilia, I know all about it, though Mr. Languedoc has never sat on a footstool at my feet smiling with that disembodied smile of his."

"My dear Francisca, how you do rattle," said Lady Masters languidly, for the day was warm. "I'm glad, though, you met Sir Blaise; for, like everybody else, I am perplexed at his extraordinary seclusion from society, especially now that we hear he has so completely recovered from his accident."

“I walked some little distance with him!” said Francisca triumphantly. “He was perfectly charming; but was there ever such a charming man as Sir Blaise? Take him all round, I defy competition; he is a knight in armour, riding about an enchanted world. When I look at him I wonder who said it was a prosy world—*prosy*. He has the tenderness of a woman, and the strength of a man. That’s what Swinburne said of Tennyson in his criticism on his last poem.”

“Mr. Languedoc read it to me,” said Cecilia.

“Mr. Languedoc is a puff-ball man,” said Francisca. “One blast from a trumpet would scatter him, poesie and all.”

“Rather too bracing, Francisca,” said Lady Masters laughing.

“I asked Sir Blaise *why* we saw nothing of him now. I said ‘The county cannot lose you.’

You have no idea, mamma, how delightfully he smiled as he replied—‘Miss Masters, have you ever been off on a quest?’ But for the smile I should have thought he was delirious still.

“‘A quest!’ I said; ‘what quest?’ Then he smiled again, and said, ‘Miss Beauchamp, my neighbour, gives recitations, I hear. If I give a recitation at Whitefriars, will you come? But I shall send out invitations in orthodox form, and invite all the county’; then he held out his hand, and bade me adieu.”

“How odd he is; how very, very odd!” said Lady Masters.

“I’ll tell you what it is, mamma,” said Francisca, “we are living in odd times. The world is getting very old, and the inhabitants are getting more and more thoughtful. I had a letter from Felicia Novello this

morning; she is in all the literary society. Lady Mary, her friend, is a sort of Mrs. Grote—and goes in for lions of this species.

“She enlarges a good deal in her letter also on a Mr. Cantilupe, whom she calls the ‘mystic,’ and declares he is gaining great ascendancy over Miss Beauchamp, whom he has introduced at Cosmos Hall. She raves about ‘The Diana,’ and says everything this season is named ‘The Beauchamp,’ from a hat to a pair of boots.

“Miss Beauchamp is to give a recitation at Lady Mary’s; and Felicia herself is about to study this science, or art, or grace of speaking. She says dancing is going out of fashion, and that very soon it will be relegated to County Asylum ball-rooms, as a pastime for those whose brains have gone astray; and that music is to be introduced under quite another form; in fine, that

some advanced spirits are leading the way, and that others are following on ; and the *salons* of to-day will soon be the forcing-houses of talent, which will blaze forth, not only in scientific fields, but in all the other fields of thought.

“Each member of society, she says, must now add his or her quota to the vast store-house. Books are going up, at a premium, for everybody is obliged to read as a quickener of his intellectual faculties ; and authors will have to write with more care, as a deeper style of romance will be in vogue, such as ‘John Inglesant.’ In truth, she declares *this* book has stirred into being a new literary era. The public have shown they can appreciate mystic teaching ; and there is to be a *Renaissance* period in literature.

“Ladies who crave for accentuated love scenes — (a friend of mine, she adds, *par*

parenthèse, complained that there was not a kiss in a novel she had just been reading)—will get them no longer. They must follow on in the school of refinement, which can paint passion in more ethereal terms, and leave subtle fancy to fill in these very human touches. Altogether, in her opinion, sensational writers will have to cleanse their imaginations.

“*Apropos* of Mr. Cantilupe, she declares he has a magic finger. His touch cures warts. ‘You remember,’ she writes, ‘the little wart on my chin. Hearing of Mr. Cantilupe’s extraordinary touch, I asked him to place his finger on it; he did, and shortly after it withered away and fell into obscurity.’

“So magic is not yet distanced by science. We are a great deal more supernatural than men of science will allow in the midst of their philosophical, scientific Cosmos, which allows

them to play with its secrets, and is all the time cracking with laughter at their so-called discoveries, which the philosophers of to-morrow disprove.

“In a postscript, she informs me that her hair is cut short like a Roundhead, and that she is quite a gentlemanly little person, the antipodes of the Intense school, who look at her through half-closed eyelids, and say, ‘Too too——!’

“The postscript continues:—‘Look out for the announcement of Miss Beauchamp’s approaching marriage to Mr. Cantilupe. Lady Mary declares she saw the shadow of a possessive pronoun in his eye at the recitation the other evening; but I say he is too mystic to take a wife. And would Miss Beauchamp sink her bewitching personality in the melancholy rigmaroles of Darby and Joan—the always the same love, than which nothing

can be more absurd? For Shakespeare says love is a madness, and praise or decry Shakespeare as you may, one thing is incontestably true: he knew life, not from one side, but in its perfect roundness. This knowledge of life, my dear Francisca, I would have it—I would see life through the misty spectacles of my great-great-grandfather, and through the jaunty eye-glass of our *flâneur*; then I should make no mistakes. Is it not Comte who has three stages in his philosophy? At what stage, according to Comte, have I arrived? After ALL we end our days where we commence them — at the multiplication table. Good-bye! Miss Beauchamp gives a recitation *here* to-morrow night, and Mr. Cantilupe is coming. Lady Mary calls her *salon* a *salon* of the future, and herself a lady of the future, and has bequeathed her diary to posterity. She says she is a follower in the

footsteps of Bacon, who did likewise. Once more, adieu.' ”

“What a racy girl Felicia is,” said Lady Masters, as Francisca folded up the letter. “She has her share of animal magnetism. Well, we shall see her in London next week, and then she can dispense a little to us.”

END OF VOL. I.

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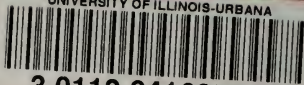
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